

THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

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

VOL. II.

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PREFACE.

IT needs but few words of introduction to this little volume, since, whatever its aim may be, its character and worth must be judged of by the truths it contains. A preceding volume has been spoken of, in reviews, in terms of praise which the editor would not like to employ or repeat; for thankful as he is for any acceptance that the Lord may give this effort for the good of souls, he would deem it its best praise if Christians were enough interested in it to pray that its future pages may be more under the guidance of the Spirit than the past, and that they may thus minister Christ more effectually to the conscience and the heart.

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THE
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THE ADVOCACY OF CHRIST.

1 John ii.

THE beginning of this chapter refers to the preceding chapter. There he is speaking of the manifestation of that eternal life which was with the Father, and the revelation of the perfect light in God, in Him of whom we read in the gospel, "the life is the light of men." Walking in the power of that life, we have fellowship with the Father and the Son; for this life is in the Son. Still, God is light: and if we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But in the light, by life, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. Then in the first two verses of the second chapter, the apostle speaks of the resources of a Christian

when he fails, (viewed as placed in this light,) as, alas! we know that we all do fail. In the former chapter we have seen three things: 1st, the Christian is in the light, as God is in the light; 2nd, he has fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This can be and is because, 3rd, the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. This depends on the possession of life, and makes the Christian's standing complete. Then in the iind chapter, the bearing of our practical feebleness here below on this is met, by grace, in another way; the Christian, having sinned, we have an advocate with the Father; and this is bringing out quite another principle altogether. It is not merely that the saint has a divine nature, making him capable, through the Holy Ghost and the efficacy of Christ's blood, of communion with the Father and the Son; that nature he has when he fails; but he is not walking in the power of it, and consequently fails, and therefore needs an advocate with the Father; and this is quite another aspect

of grace, from that of communion. It is not joying in God, the just state of the Christian, but the interference of God in grace, in the person of a mediator, one between God and us. Now, what is in question here is not our justification. There is no possibility of anything being imputed to us. He was made sin for us, and the work of Christ has put us in God's presence without a question remaining as to righteousness, and that position we never lose. It is not that which is here touched on, but another thing of all-importance to us, the daily exercise of spiritual affections in free communion with God. It is not that we fail, as to our standing, *before Him*—Christ is that, and He cannot change—but down here we do. "In many things we offend all." We fail constantly, inwardly and outwardly, but the exercise of our affections must be, if they are real, according to what we are down here, dependent, on one hand, on our increasing in the knowledge of God, and of what His love is; and, on the

other, on what our real state is. God demands righteousness, but it is not, as many think, that the work of blood-sprinkling has to be done over again, or that our righteousness has failed before God; for the moment I believe, I am righteous as He is. *There is no decay of it*; it is always of the same value. This is a question of who He is—who is my righteousness. The advocacy of Christ is founded on this unchanging righteousness, and on the fact that it has brought us into the light, as God is in the light; and it reconciles the circumstances of feebleness or failure of our actual state with the privileges of our standing in the light, through righteousness divine. It is founded on the fact of the new exercise of heart and conscience into which I am brought, by being placed, through Christ's blood, in the perfect light and love of God, with a nature formed to enjoy them. The advocacy of Christ is thus founded on the fact that, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, I have my conscience exercised in a way I

could not before, in view of the light and love of God, in which I am, to which I belong, in my new nature. It could not be exercised if the righteousness were not complete; nor, if it were not, could God deal with sin as He does in discipline and tenderness, through the priesthood of Christ. But He is, as here expressed in connexion with it, Jesus Christ the righteous, and the propitiation for our sins. He intercedes on the ground of our present standing in righteousness, in the presence of God, in Him, and of the propitiation having been made for the sins in respect of which He intercedes. The righteousness is always in the presence of God. He has not to look for that now in His dealing with us, for Christ is always there. God has been perfectly displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and perfectly glorified, as to sin, by Him; and now I can go into His presence and not be afraid, because of this righteousness. But how is my intercourse with God to be carried on by such a poor failing thing as I am,

and that in the presence of light, and called to walk in it as God is in it? It goes on in virtue of what I am in Christ. Christ, my righteousness, does not need to be maintained or renewed. He fails and changes not, nor does my righteousness; but I need to be sustained. Suppose I have failed, my communion is at once interrupted: God cannot have communion with evil. Well, here the advocacy comes in; Christ's priesthood comes in to meet me; it does not acquire the righteousness, but lifts me up, if I fail, in virtue of it. The intercession of priesthood imputes to me, as my abiding position in divine righteousness, what I am in God's sight, to lead me to judge myself, according to the light I have been brought into by this righteousness. My judgment of good and evil increases, no doubt, as I grow up before God. But from the beginning of my justified career, the standard of my judgment is the light of God's presence. There are two things needed: grace to keep us in the way, and mercy to restore us

to communion, when we have got out of it. In the enjoyment of these, our great High Priest secures us,—all the grace, in a word, we need by the road, while He maintains us in the abiding assurance of our position before God. Peter did not lose his trust and confidence in God, though he denied his Master. Satan might come and say to the soul, “it is all over with you; you are too bad; His sentence is gone out against you, and there is no hope;” and thus confidence in God, our only resource in failure, be lost. But before Peter failed, Christ had prayed for him: thus he learned what he was in himself, and knew the grace that sustained him; and then he uses it to profit: “Strengthen thy brethren.” He was competent to help those who were weak and failing like himself, because he knew his weakness and the blessed resource of grace. It is exactly the same grace that met us at the first, that sustains us all the journey through.

Here is the government of God, as

a father with his family. It is not like "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." This is the most dreadful of all chastisements, the leaving us to eat the fruit of our ways. God surely will never finally forsake us, but He may leave us to the fruit of our own ways. This is an extreme case. In general He will deal with us in present discipline, according to our ways. As I have before remarked elsewhere, this government of God, in this sense, His love, the present exercise of manifested affections towards us, is made to depend on our acts and doings, as in John xiv, 23 ; xv, 10. God's love to us, as sinners, we well know, does not, nay, cannot, depend on our love to Him ; for it is as sinners He loves us in grace : and so, even as to our conduct, (for, after all, it is grace that enables us to go on well,) He deals with us always in grace, and can be nothing else towards us ; still it is here connected with His righteous ways. He takes notice of our conduct, of the state of our hearts, our walk. God deals with

His children. And so Christ as a Son over His own house. If we speak rashly to our brother, or walk abroad carelessly through the streets, and see some vanity and are distracted, we shall find the effect of it in our own souls at the end of the day with God. If an angry word escapes me, I feel the effect at the end of the day with God: better still if, at the moment, judging oneself. Grace will restore us. God will follow us, and bring us back. If we had a child that was unruly, we should not give it up, but wait upon it in love, and correct it in hope of reclaiming it. I might see a child go wrong, and leave it; but if it be my own child, if it be mine, I must go after it, and bring it back. This is the patience of His grace. At the same time God can never give up His holiness. No, He could not pass by or suffer unholiness in His child,—indeed it were our infinite loss if He allowed it in us. Therefore, also, was it needful that Christ should die. Thus God was debtor, so to speak, to Christ, on ac-

count of His work, for the glory of His character. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." "I have glorified thee on the earth." "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Thus nothing is passed by; but this is accomplished once for all. But the same thing is true in regard of Christ's advocacy for us. If there is failure, God sees it; but Jesus comes in and intercedes for us, that it may turn into an occasion of instruction, correction, and profit. Some say that we have to use the priesthood of Christ, that is demand Him to exercise it; but it is not so. Christ uses it for us. Why do I turn to God when I have failed? It is because Christ has used it, and fresh grace is applied, which has drawn me back to Him; fresh grace has wrought in my mind, in virtue of the intercession to which *my wandering* gave occasion. There is nothing in us brings us back to God but fresh grace working in our consciences. There-

fore it is said, "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father." It is not "if any man *repent*." It is just as much pure grace as at the first looked upon us, when we were in our sins. In the case of Peter, the Lord foretold him what would take place, "Satan has desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee." He needed this sifting; and Christ does not ask that he should escape it; but before Peter got the sin, or run into the danger, the Lord had prayed for him; His grace was in exercise, and at the moment when it is needed. "He looked at Peter," and grace wrought its work. His weeping was the fruit of Christ's intercession and grace, not the cause or motive of it. The grace and intercession of Jesus is exercised towards us in all the grace and wisdom of God. It is grace which makes our very failure the occasion of God's coming in with more grace. The righteousness is not called in question; it is not touched. It is through the intercession

of Jesus that I can get to God about my evil thoughts. All the consciousness of failure, all the exercises of heart, are the occasion of my going to the Father; and form so many links to link my soul to God: we learn it in our every-day wants and failures; we are all astray if we do not see that God has a holy foundation for all this. It does not follow that we *must* fail. God is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. The roots and principles of sin ought to be judged in communion before God. We ought not to fail, though we all *do*. Our wretched self-confidence makes us fail, and then comes in the priesthood. It is the rod of Aaron. Moses had, indeed, smitten the rock at the first, that the people might have water, but this was not to be repeated; but it was Aaron's rod that blossomed and bore fruit; and he was to speak to the rock, and it would give its water—divine prevalency in priesthood. That is the way grace takes away the murmuring of the heart.

Two years Israel was in the desert ; and thirty-eight years more, because they did not go up and take the land, as they had been told ; and if we, like Israel, will not go up, it detects our state—we are making the way long. Israel had not the faith to go up to the Anakims. If we would break with the world, and take up the cross properly, it would give us the enjoyment of the full power of communion with God at once ; if not, we must learn, by its daily mortification in the desert, what flesh is. If we think to escape dangers by leaving the path of faith, we shall surely get into sin. Israel found the same Anakims in Canaan, the giants still there, when they got into the land at last, that frightened them at the first, and hindered their taking possession. What is the reason Christians have often more joy on a death-bed than all their life through before ? Why, the reason is, they had never till then surrendered up all for Christ, had never before learned Christ to be everything, and everything else to be dung and dross.

But Israel's raiment had not waxed old for forty years in the wilderness, neither did their feet swell. They learned in all this way the wonderful detail of all God's goodness. The manna never ceased, and the patient grace never fails to the end. Our foolish hearts, alas ! will not trust God, and so the Lord shows us the patience of His grace. He goes with us wherever we go, even in our failures, as He turned back with Israel through the wilderness ; and if our hearts have experienced the exercises of the desert, we have learned the vanity of earthly things, and after all find it better to give it *all* up, and trust God that He may be everything to us ; and if we had done it at first, we should have had it at once. But to continue. The constant exercise of Christ's priesthood is carried on in heaven, in connexion with our heavenly standing, and is made to bear on our actual daily state down here ; we are to be heavenly men on the earth. Christ was the heavenly man down here ; we are joined to

Christ by one Spirit. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." Mark the effect. What was Christ? Not only the obedient man, the perfect man under the law, but He was the perfect manifestation of the divine nature in a man; there was in a man all the effect that Godhead could produce of goodness in a man, (I am not speaking of miracles,) patience, endurance, love, purity, holiness, and every other grace. It is not that we can be as Christ *was*, because sin is in us: there was none in Him. But we *are* called *to walk* as He walked, through the power of His grace making us walk in the Spirit. There is not a willingness always to walk: there is *a will in us*. He must break our will. So long as our walk does not flow from the word of God, there is flesh working, and there must be weakness in the ways of God. "Well, but," one may say, "I am so young a Christian; I am so weak." It is not a question of age in grace. If your eye were single, and there were not self-dependence,

God would not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but would, with the temptation, make a way for you to escape. We may be weak, but that is no hindrance to our walking as He walked, for His strength is made perfect in weakness; but He cannot be the strength of our will. One born only yesterday may follow Christ as much as an old Christian, and Christ is as much for him; there may not be so much wisdom, but in the child in Christ there is often more singleness of eye and more undividedness of heart; the great thing is that the will does not work. There it is, again, we see where Christ was so perfect. Still I see in Jesus that He comes down to the first moment in the divine life in sinners. This we see at the baptism of John. John calls to repentance, and they go, and Christ goes with them. He needed no repentance, as John insists, for He had no sin; but in them it was the first step of spiritual life, and Christ accompanies them there. From the first step which the work-

ing of God's word in them produced, in this baptism by John, there is not one that Christ does not take with them; no spiritual step in the whole course of our life in which Christ does not throw Himself into our path. He is the life, in which we walk in it. The will of God was the spring of all Christ's conduct. He was come to do *His* will: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." "Mine ears hast thou opened."* That is, He put Himself in the place of obedience; and hence the rendering of the passage is accepted: "A body hast thou prepared me." He became a man, that is, took the place of a servant; He was to walk by what He heard. He was willing to do this, "Lo, I come." "Not my will, but thine be done." The will of God was the spring of all His con-

* More exactly *cut* or *dug* for me. It is not the same Hebrew word used elsewhere, as in Isaiah 50, for example. That was daily opening, this the taking the place of hearing the commands of another, even of His Father. This was the body being prepared; for in becoming a man He became a servant.

duct. He was not only the obedient One, as we commonly understand obedience, that is having a will of His own, yielding it up when prohibition came ; such, and in a certain sense justly, we should call obedience in a child : Christ never had such. His Father's will was His one motive for acting. Where no word from Him was Christ remained still. He might be hungry, but would not use His power by His own will, —“ Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” He might love Martha and Mary, but He waits God's time and will to go to them. “ The Father has *sent* me,” He says, and I live by [or properly on account of, in virtue of my connexion with Him] the Father,” &c. We are not only *so* to walk, as to acts, as He walked, but the way He walked, in principle and motive. *Right* conduct does not suffice, it must be *obedient* conduct. The spring of Christ's conduct was never His own will ; not that His will had to be corrected, but He came to do His Father's will. Satan

tried to hinder ; man tried to hinder ; but He goes through it all. He takes the first place, as indeed He must go first in the difficulties. "When he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them." He was led by the Spirit to be tempted ; everything that could put His obedience to the test must be tried on Him. He learned it by the things which He suffered. Yet even here we see the difference in the glory of Christ's person and another. Moses had to fast forty days to be with God on the mount : Christ, as a living man on earth, was always with God. He fasts forty days to be with Satan, tempted in the wilderness ; and you could not see Him in those circumstances without seeing who was there. If all the glory of the world was offered to Christ there, it is offered to you in detail every day ; and we see, in a day like this, people are hurrying after it with all their hearts. Well, Christ meets him. "Make these stones bread ;" satisfy your hunger by your own will. He had no word from God for it. His will was

never shown; it was perfect obedience; the humble, holy, patient life, that does not stir without God. If you will not do anything without a word from God, then you are sure to have the strength of God in what you do. "Cast thyself down." No; He would not put God *to the test*. He was not going to tempt God by trying whether He would protect Him. He had confidence in God. As we read, "the people tempted God, saying, Is God among us?" They would prove whether He was among them or no; and this is the scriptural sense of tempting God. He was sure in the way of obedience to find Him. When Mary and Martha sent to the Lord, saying, "Lazarus is sick," He does not stir; He had no word from God; and he died. Mary might think it cruel that He should abide two days in the same place, and not come immediately to heal him. If He had been there He might have wrought a common miracle; but His raising him from the dead is for the glory of God. Satan tries him; but there was no will which had self for its

centre and object. Satan must betray himself at last. "If thou wilt fall down and worship me, all shall be thine." But a manifested Satan, to the obedient servant of God, is a conquered one: "Get thee behind me, Satan." Still He takes the word, "it is written," as the obedient man; but this is power. Satan has power against pretension, against knowledge, but no power against obedience, if we are acting by the word, with no will of our own. He took His conduct from the word. It was the source of His conduct. "If we say we abide in him, we ought to walk even as Christ also walked." Satan was baffled; the strong man was bound; and that is how He bound him, by simple obedience. He then exercises, freely for man, the power which overcame the enemy: that is a distinct subject. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, cast out devils, raised the dead; He could have set men in blessing here, destroying the works of the devil, if they had been capable of happiness, and prepared to enjoy God. But man's heart

itself was enmity against God. Will and lust were there, and another work, redemption and a new creation, were needed: but Christ passed through everything that could be put before Him, to hinder Him in the path of godliness; *everything that could test the divine life*. Christ knew in that sense what it was to be tempted like as we are, sin apart. It was all the exercises He went through which prepared Him to be our High Priest. Man will say, and has said, He cannot feel what I feel of inward conflict. I answer, we need sympathy in the exercises of the divine life in our souls, not sympathy in our lusts; those we must practically kill, as we have a right to count ourselves dead. But everything that could try a living man He passed through, perfect in all; and He learned the application of His Father's love to His heart in it all, in the peace which He experienced: and now He can say to us, "*My peace I leave with you,*" and "that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. If the world has hated me, it will hate you; but be of good

cheer, I have overcome the world." He knew and understood experimentally and practically, as a man, in passing through this world, how divine favour from above flowed in the comforts of a tried soul, and applied itself to every exercise such a soul went through here below, in the midst of ruin and the presence of the enemies;—how it was sufficient for every soul's need to live in holiness, and enjoy God in spite of everything that beset Him in this life of holiness. He who lived it is become our life, and He strengthens our human hearts in the pain and trial of living it, which He has felt. Do we want to be comforted, when sin is at work? No; we want what is sharper than any two-edged sword for that. This judges the intentions of the heart, there where the sin lies. For the infirmities we have our High Priest, who feels them. He has suffered, being tempted. He will strengthen the new man against the lusts of the old. As to imputation or distress arising from that, it is gone for the believer; as to dominion, sin has it not over us, if we

are under grace ; we are under law if it has. The most cases of distressed hearts who would seek Christ's sympathy in their conflicts need to be set free. They are under law. Strength against sin we do need, and that Christ will surely give ; but if we are under grace sin has not dominion over us. There may be careless failure, but this is not the case of distress we speak of. It rather needs a rod, though God may graciously draw even out of this. But in sorrow and trial we have Christ's sympathy.

The Lord knew what trouble was ; His soul was bowed down with trouble, but the first word is, " Father." The first moment we are in sorrow, instead of looking around for comfort, for sympathy, or looking to the actings of the flesh, as to what I have *done* or what I have *not* done, and pouring forth our sorrow in nothing but fleshly murmuring, let us turn immediately to God ; and then the heart would be cast down, indeed, perhaps,—Christ's could be,—but in perfect submission to the will of God, and thus the sting of the sorrow

would be removed. The instant there is perfect submission, there is perfect peace. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour, yet for this cause came I to this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The deepest depths are the occasion for Him of the deepest submission, and all is light. "Not my will but thine be done," is the expression of His heart, when finally tested with that which He could not, because He ought not, but to have wished to pass, before which He righteously feared—God's holy wrath. But I return a little back to give its true character to this last trial, as regards us, and one that Christ could, as we have seen, so far as victory over Satan's power went, have brought in all the promised blessing at once. He could have raised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as He did Lazarus. But, alas! another awful truth was brought out. It was not merely Satan's power and its sad effects. *Man did not like Christ to be there*, even though He delivered him. He would not have God, even if He came to

bless. He showed himself to be alienated from God in his own mind, and was proved utterly incapable of enjoying happiness where God was the source of it. The carnal mind is enmity against God; dreadful thought! "Now have ye seen and hated both me and my Father." Christ could not have anything to do with the world in its moral state. But did grace and divine love cease to work? No; of course God knew all this; and this very rejection brought out the full purpose and work of His grace, and the trial of Christ, which hung on the accomplishment of it. He now had to meet the effect of sin itself in the power of Satan, holding man captive under death to the judgment and wrath of God, against sin—for I still speak of the trial, not the work of atonement itself. But He had to redeem man; and if Gethsemane was, as He declares, the power of the enemy, the cross was the judgment, the terrors of which the enemy sought to use against him. And now He takes the place in resurrection, to apply redemption; the

righteousness was worked out, that we should take our place in heaven; we must be broken off from the world. He gives us everything in the way, but never presents it as our end. It is neither Canaan nor Egypt, but a wilderness. By clinging to it we are not in the wilderness, but in heart turned back to Egypt. And that is why so many need chastening; for if we would make a Canaan of it, then it will become Egypt to us. The moment we make it our home, and settle down in it, it is our Egypt; and the Lord must break our will, thus keeping us there. He says, "A little while and the world seeth me no more." For Him it is entirely done with. He puts a distinction between Himself and the world. Therefore if we take Him we cannot have the world, and if we take the world we cannot have Him; we cannot have both. "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." Men are everywhere playing into the infidels' hands, in thinking to make the world better

with their brotherhood, their arts and sciences, their social intercourse—making themselves happy without God; for while they make a show of their cleverness, and talk a great deal about acknowledging God's gift in the skill and ability he has bestowed upon man; they do it to exalt man, and continue still to reject both God and His gifts. They will not have a *God in Christ*. Men think the world can be set right by cultivation and science, by encouraging the arts, and such like. Why Christ could not set it right: infidels are saying, christianity is only a figment, for it has not set the world right, and men are taking the words of Christ in their mouths, saying men should love one another as brethren, and bringing all nations together to cultivate amity and good will, and the very words that they take in their mouths, while they are thus seeking to make the world happy, are the words that the infidels use. They would make it happy, too, in the same way. Christ knew it could not be, and declared plainly it would not be the effect of His coming. No: as

to the world, its day is over. Christ was rejected by the world, and its day is closed. God's grace is gathering *out* sinners; but as to the world, the Lord said, "it seeth me no more." Either it is to get better *without Christ*, or not to get better at all. "It has hated both him and his Father," and its day is over. "I have got one Son," we read in the Lord's description of His Father's ways, "it may be they will reverence my Son." They took Him and slew Him, saying, "the inheritance will be ours." And this is what has been done, and now men are making the world comfortable as their own inheritance. The Lord preserve us from all the deception which, by the side of Christ, close to Him, we so soon detect. He has taken a heavenly place. "Such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens." He exercises His ministry where we belong. I do not belong to the earth. We have a heavenly calling, and need a heavenly priest, who has gone up on high to take our hearts up

with Him. Our body is not gone up yet, but we have our place with Him up there. Christ Himself, who was a man on earth, manifested a heavenly character down here.

Christ having given us our place on high, after having put away all our sins, sends down the Comforter that we may manifest Him in our walk down here, being living epistles of Christ "known and read of all men," a heavenly people on the earth. God loved us when we hated Him. We are to love those who do not love us, and thus show the character of God down here. Christ was the living expression of it as a man. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk even as he walked." As High Priest, Christ obtains for us all we need, and lifts us up if we do fall; but He sustains us to walk as He walked, having the word of God as the source of our actions, as God was the source of all His thoughts; but if we fail, there is grace to restore us. (ii, 1.) "That ye sin not," is the object of revealing our privileges and the grace that has placed

us in communion with the God of light; “but if any man sin we have an advocate,” &c. Flesh ought never to work; your life ought never to be an expression of the flesh, but of the obedience of a child. The youngest child in Christ cannot walk as a father in Christ, but he can walk in the obedience of a child with Christ. We have the flesh; but if I am in the light, practically, with God, I know what the flesh is; but then all that I am, as regards the flesh, is judged. A child of *two* years old can be as obedient as a child of *twelve* years. It is not a question of age, of strength, but of obedience. We have the pattern of Christ at twelve years old, who was obedient to Joseph and his mother, and went home with them, being subject unto them. “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk.” Is this the delight of your soul, to walk as He walked, as self-denying, as separated from the world, with as much love; or would you spare something?—a little bit of the world, a little bit of comfort? Christ never did, or you could not have

been saved. Peter said, "this be far from thee, Lord:" spare thyself. His reply was, "get thee behind me, Satan." How often does our wretched heart say, spare thyself. That is not walking as Christ walked; not doing His bidding as our Master. Have your hearts been attracted by the beauty of Christ? It is real liberty. The world is merely a snare to entrap us: not that I would scorn the world, Christ did not scorn it; but the world is just this—Satan using all manner of things to seduce the flesh, and *that* is the world. Satan attracts us by his snares, and has the soul in bondage; but the liberty in which the Son has set us, is to be free from the flesh, the world, and sin, and Satan; not only to walk as He walked, but to walk with Him in perfect freedom, and in the comfort and consciousness of walking with Him. May we find our joy in Him, not pursuing a life of our own hearts, but a life of His grace and goodness, and may He keep our hearts fixed on Him; and a crown with Him will close in eternal blessing the history of His grace.

BAPTISM.

In considering this great subject, (though in few words,) it is intended to avoid *all* question of the time of the application of it, and the like ; and to regard in it only the mind of God as the object of faith.

The first and fundamental character of all baptism, as an appointment in the outward sign, is, that it is UNTO something. The children of Israel were baptized *unto* Moses in the cloud and in the sea : that is, unto the covenant they were to receive at Mount Sinai, in subjection to him who was over God's house ; separated from Egypt and all that was in it, and from the rule of its ruler, by the cloud that stood between them and the land of Egypt at Migdol, as afterward by the sea.

Those who came to John were baptized *unto* repentance, John saying that they should believe on Him that should come after him, even Christ. The Messiah was about to appear to Israel as the reformer of their state ;

and the new covenant was the law written in their hearts; and Christ was to rule as the Head of His own house. The word repentance at once betokens what they were to be separated from, namely, the departure from God in the existing state of Judaism, which, as it was, rejected Christ when He came.

The baptism the Lord left was *unto Himself*.* *Faith was come*. The covenant of righteousness of life and of power in Christ by GRACE. Those who received baptism, as confessing the name of Christ, (in baptism they put on Christ) were evidently in a very various state of advance; some were zealous of the law, others capable of being shown its weakness, but the relationship to Christ in character was an established thing, and every advance only left more behind, in the separation first indicated. The baptized Jew, now zealous of the law, might ad-

* So *eis onoma*, *unto the name*; *ενονοματι*, *IN the name*, occurs but once, in the case of Cornelius, on whom the Holy Ghost rested as at the beginning.

vance to an apprehension of being dead to the law by the body of Christ, and to the knowledge of union with Christ by faith. Such would not be baptized again. If this baptism were *into* anything, (as may be considered shortly,) it is not into Christ; but the separation is from all that was evil, and all that was old, whether the soul realized it or not, and that Christ supplied the place of all. It was in truth, then, a separation from law, from the world, from the rudiments of the world, and from all that applied itself to man, in his various pretences as capable of good, and from ordinances UNTO Christ. The doctrine of Romans vi, stands out pre-eminently as marking the separation from the old man in the fruits thereof, in being buried with Christ.* In Colossians ii, separation is from philosophy and vain deceit, from the traditions of men, from the hand-writing

* I believe the expression in Rom. vi, 4, of baptism into or unto death, is a collective expression, describing what baptism characteristically is, as given of God.

of ordinances that was against us, from sabbaths, and the like, and from all else that is not now by the living God applied to our soul in Christ, *through faith*.

We are complete in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power.

Further, it is most important for us to see that the things really left us by the Lord relate to us *as on earth*. HEIRS BY GRACE TO THE KINGDOM, *we are separated in the world, by baptism, unto Christ*. Nor is it needful to look for significations in these things, for us on earth they can be something. To this the expression of *burial* directs us. Baptism is given us as the *grave* of Christ, and all the things which life in Christ has stamped with death are *buried* with Him, and we and they with Him, in baptism. We are buried (thus can those that are dead in Him look at it) in His grave. We are buried with Him by baptism. The mind of God in it is the object that our hearts are directed to. It is practically important. There is power in measure, through faith, as appealed to by the

apostle in Romans vi. It is important to say that the old man, in his sinful habits, as on earth, is buried. This is being buried with Christ by baptism into or unto death.* The living subject of baptism sees the assigned place of these things. We who are alive and conscious are so to see them. Christ, charged with them, went down into the grave, and came out of the grave without them, and we, coming *out* of the water, leave them all, and all that can apply to them, being weak through the flesh, *in* the water, in the mind of God. We leave ourselves there. We look back on our baptism in such an aspect, and are called on by the apostle to do so.

The Church, *as divine*, is baptized with something else, namely, with the Spirit of God, uniting her to Christ in living existence. The baptism of the Church, as conferring its special character, is *heavenly*. She has a time to sojourn on earth, and to this baptism refers. The Church, as on earth, has

* See Note, p. 35.

a subjection and confession to fulfil to the Lord, who hath purchased her for Himself, and given her, besides, a character as joint-heir with Him ; and her holiness on earth is in being true to it to His glory. The difference between these two greatly affects the application of terms in scripture, which may in no wise be confounded. It is the mingling of that which is of earth and that which is of heaven that has been and is injurious to truth, and to the use of the things of God according to God.

It is not that we are not to see, as on earth, something more than that which is merely significant of other things. It is not intended to enter on them in this point of view now, and they are quite distinct from them.

But to resume : the moral necessity of the truth connected with the reality of baptism, as the burial of all that could usurp the place of life, is evident. The divine truth, that the power of Christ's death upon all evil is the necessary preliminary to the expansion

of the divine life, is instructive; that carries us far into the divinely moral order of our restoration in the image of Christ. That this is expressed in baptism, over and above the actual burial of the old things, is manifest from scripture. The old man, and all that could attach to him, is to be never seen out of the water again; for it is in this burial we divinely rise, by the regenerating power of God, "through faith of the operation of God." It is not *out of it*, but *in it*. (Col. ii, 12.) So it is in Rom. vi, in its proper proportion. We are buried into the death—in fact, in this aspect, the old man is in the grave buried, that we might walk (being risen in the power of God) in newness of life. So in Peter iii, 21, We are *saved* by baptism—clearly by what must die (in order that we should live) lying buried there; in the answer of a good conscience in the living and divine condition of the living man; in fact by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whenever all that was to be buried rises, it causes to

sink, so to say, all that which ought always to be above the place of death in the power of the glory of the Father. This is the divinely moral truth given us in these things.

As divine and heavenly, the Church can know nothing but the Spirit of God, as above with Christ, having spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. Christ is our righteousness; ordinances, therefore, receive a secondary place only. This, their real place, should be seen, lest otherwise they make a gift of God for blessing in the place assigned to them, an occasion of stumbling, and they become a door to the apostacy; and such have they become, and become fixed, as such, through the tradition of men. They were given to serve the purpose of separation. All ordinances were, and those left by Christ as well,—baptism administered by others; the Lord's supper—the act of the living adoration of the Church. We may be in a state of imperfect knowledge as to either, but except as an act of living adoration

of the Church in worship in the Supper of the Lord, the knowledge of and faith in the mind of God in them will make a great difference in our blessing. There are many things we have to know about them, which, as they are gradually received, are better sought in the word. Nor ought we to close these remarks without some direct reference to the necessary truth, that we must die in order to live, applying it *immediately* to our consciences. Found of God when we sought Him not—sought in the wonders of His grace—we are exhorted to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. This is in the shape of motive, but the matter also lies deeper. The actual relationship of death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness, that being by nature born in sin, but now the children of *grace*, we may be moulded daily into the likeness of Christ, is the work of God by faith—changed into the same image, says the apostle, from glory to glory. “If,” says St. Paul, Rom. vi, 5,

“we are (or have become) plants together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be plants of his resurrection, (or plants in the likeness of his resurrection.)” Justly the same fountain should not bring forth sweet water and bitter. How can there be growth in the Spirit (putting all seeming aside) but in the declension of the flesh and its lusts. If by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, saith the apostle, ye shall live. If ye walk after the flesh ye shall die. Let that mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus; who on the cross condemned sin in the flesh in dying. It was truth told to us in Him, in whom was no sin. If ye are Christ’s, ye have crucified the affections and the lusts. There is no room allowed of God for the old creation and the new in the same man. According to this truth is the death *intimated* to the Christian in his baptism and in the mind of God in it, and in it is the resurrection he finds in its realization, by the exceeding greatness of God’s power to usward who

believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

The separation of us from the world is more on the surface, but is as express. The apostacy has so far grown that its use of baptism is an entry into the world, instead of a separation out of it and from it; while the baptized should, as thus passed the Red Sea, look over the closed waters on the towers and pyramids and glories of Egypt, shut out from them for ever, while they rejoice on the way. Let every Babylonish garment, every pursuit of forgetfulness, of which Satan makes such use,—not to say the enticing pursuit of the world itself,—be seen as cut off from us in the water. The pursuit of the world's possession (amidst which God may in His grace have given on earth duties of application to His glory,—and yet, blessed are the poor) shall pierce the soul through with many sorrows, sent in grace that

the true and divine riches, those only called "our own," may be duly estimated as enduring for ever; while He will not leave nor forsake those that are fed of His bounty in the wilderness, or as strangers in the land.

Now the Lord increase us in acquaintance with the ways of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, unto all fruitfulness unto eternal life, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

THE NATURE AND EFFECT OF DISCIPLINE EXEMPLIFIED IN GOD'S PEOPLE.

ADAM.

No subject can be more deeply interesting to the saint, than the nature and effect of discipline, which our God, in the plenitude of His love and wisdom, administers to each of His people.

Interesting as the subject is, and one so necessary to the secret exercises of the soul, yet it is little understood; and the dealings of God are either

counted strange, or there is no just or useful solution of them.

I propose, therefore, in the Lord's mercy, to present, in a series of papers, the peculiar discipline, its object and its effect, as detailed to us, respecting each distinguished witness for God on earth.

I am induced to do this, in order to accustom the minds of saints to study more a subject which of all others connects us with the secret, loving thoughts of our God about us.

I accordingly begin with Adam. Though not properly heading the life of faith, yet he was the subject of severe discipline, and is a remarkable illustration of its effects. Adam at one time needed no discipline, a state unknown to any since. When he fell the day of discipline began. He that was made in the image of God, that approached nearer to God than any creature, even he is now imbued with a spirit and a nature so adverse to God, that if he would live for God he must learn to renounce his own will, under the training of the mighty hand

of God. To Adam this must have been a strange contrast to the once easy acquiescence of his mind with the will of God. Consequently he must have felt it the more; and as the rebellion of his heart was subdued, he could contrast the rule of God with the powerlessness of innocence. As innocent, he fell; as fallen, the hand of God exalts him. Not ignorantly, or passively, but in all the activity of anxious conviction. Innocence with him was a weak thing; the power of God subduing his nature, no longer innocent, was a great thing. He never would have sought the innocent state, for he knew how weak it was. He knew now that he was able to do more with the power of God in a fallen state, than in unassisted innocence he ever could aspire to. As innocent, he had no sense of life; as fallen, yet believing in the revelation of God, he could now name the only creature he had *not* named, *the mother of all living*. Under the sentence of death, he could speak of life; while as innocent, his fear and his penalty, (if

disobedient) was the loss of it. Innocence had no charm for him now. True, it was a moment of wondrous bliss; but a flight so high only ensures precipitation to disgrace and dismay. Surely, then, he could not seek a return to it. He had been advanced to where he could not stand; but now, under discipline, he stands *morally* higher, though in *condition* he is lower. Adam was not deceived, but he was influenced. He early discovers the propensities of nature (no doubt in their best estate) which eventually led to his fall. Neither the world, nor its glory, nor any class of the inferior creatures, supply the craving of the sociable heart of Adam: for him there was not found an help meet for him, and it was not good for him to be alone. The instincts of his nature must be satisfied; but still more, when his wife was deceived, he yields to her influence, as he himself admits, "she gave unto me, and I did eat." The first man disclosed this secret of his heart, that he was dependent on an-

other; so that when Satan would not venture to beguile *him*, the object of his affections successfully tempted him. Now they are both naked, and both estranged from God, and hiding themselves from His presence, the first lessons of His grace are propounded to them. In discipline there is properly *conviction* of sin, as well as correction of it. With a saint it is never penance or compensation for wrong-doing. Chastening or correction is to make me a partaker of holiness, not a sufferer for sin. It is not to improve my nature, but to so convince me of its utter helplessness that I may be devoted unto God, which is the true and distinct meaning of sanctification, and without which no man shall see the Lord. There is exceeding pain in being convicted of sin; and if there be not a strong sense of the grace of God when we are convicted, there will be great depression, and a tendency to give up all in despair. Hence the exhortation, "faint not when thou art *convicted* [Greek] of him." God does

not convict hastily. He likes that our cogitations on our own acts should convict ourselves. It is very little use to tell a vain man of his faults ; it generally only urges him the better to conceal or extenuate them. It is very hard to induce a person in ill health and unconvinced of it, to adopt the necessary regimen ; the more you remonstrate with such an one, the more strenuously will he endeavour to prove you mistaken, and you exasperate the malady you would assuage, while the really sin-convicted soul, like the patient tremblingly alive to his danger, is ready to receive every true palliative and remedy offered. When Adam had *perfected* the devices of his now estranged and corrupted heart, when the aprons are on and he behind the trees, the voice of God searches him. We are continually allowed to run to the end of our own plans, and thus to learn how futile they are. Many a weary hour and long day is squandered in the execution of plans which, when tested by the searching word of God, must be en-

tirely abandoned. What is the nature of your plans? are they to distance and conceal you from God, or are they to bring you nigh unto Him, and to unfold to Him the minutest secrets of your heart? You may thus test your plans. Adam's were to cloak himself and to escape the eye of God, and God allowed him to complete his schemes. Oh, how well each of us knows what this is! The poor prodigal tries the far country, but returns to his father's house a really humbled man. The many inventions are all tested and found to be as husks, and then the soul listens to the gracious tones of that voice it would fain escape from. It is a terrible question to answer, "Where art thou?" when you find out the insufficiency of all expedients to screen your conscience from the action of God's word. Did the prodigal like to answer it when feeding the swine? Did Peter like to answer it when enjoying the cheer of his Master's foes, when warming himself at their fire? Did Adam like it

when he remembered the position which he occupied in contrast with the one he had forfeited? The answer to that question tells his state. The voice of God searches the conscience, and if it has not learned that it is with God it has to do, the history of it must be, "I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." Concealment is the first effort of a suffering conscience. You neither like to see yourself, nor that any one else should see you, as you are; and when *God's* voice reaches you, you hide yourself; while concealment betrays distance as well as evasion. There must be some activity in the conscience when concealment is resorted to, especially when no penalty (but the fact of your guilt being known) is attached to it. The babe who breaks a toy conceals it! Concealment is, in fact, resorted to in order that we may appear better than we are. If we were willing that every one should see us as we are, there would be no concealment. A disguise was never yet adopted but for self-exalta-

tion. A lie was never maintained but to give us credit we did not deserve. When God deals with us we learn that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." The word (see Heb. iv) acts on our conscience, "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;" but it conducts us to God. It is with Him, and not the word merely, "*we have to do.*" The voice of the Lord penetrated the soul of Adam; and though girdled with fig-leaves, which satisfied his own standard of morality, yet when the word came it tried him, and he was afraid because he was naked, (naked before God,) and he hid himself. It is important to study those two actions of the conscience. They give rise to much exercise and trouble in the soul, because they are confounded; that is when one has satisfied his own conscience, has adopted some system which conceals from himself and others the real state of his

soul, he floats for awhile on peaceful waters; but no sooner is the voice of the Lord heard, but all the elements seem to him involved in a mighty tornado. His sleep is broken; he is another Philipian jailor, "he is afraid." The fact that he is naked and opened before God flashes fearfully before him, and so much the worse because he had deceived himself, and his reputation with others had helped it on. The action of the word of God would be desperate and overwhelming to the soul if we had not a "great high priest passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." His sympathy, on the ground of His atonement, in full effect before God, sets the convicted conscience at rest, and at the throne of grace, *too*, to receive the grace and the mercy it needs. This is just what Adam had to learn; consequently the voice pursues him to his hiding-place. It is in vain that one seeks to escape the eye of God. When He determines that it shall search you, if you take the wings of the morning and dwell in the utter-

most parts of the sea, even there He will reach you! Oh, how the conscience that seeks escape from God overshadows itself within the foliage of this world! It engrosses itself with man's leading and most ambitious pursuits, but in vain. The "watchers" will cry aloud, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves." The refuge of lies shall be exposed, and the soul must have its account with God. It must answer, "WHERE ART THOU?" and all the answer needed is the tale of the plain and simple facts, "I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself!" The moment the soul of the saint is in full confession, he is in the region of forgiveness and restoration, and the Spirit expostulates with it as man would with his fellow. Adam tried his own expedients, and they were vain and profitless; now he will be a listener to the grace that tells of the sure and perfect remedy. But mark, he first discloses the true and full tale of the condition of his soul; he confesses his fear—his

nakedness—his *effort* to hide himself! Discipline had effected this. Now God instructs him. Adam is “meek,” and God will teach him His way. He has learned that innocence was no protection against an undue influence, and that the absence of evil motive is no guarantee for true moral action. He, of all men, knew what this was pre-eminently, and yet it was no safeguard. He was tempted, and he yielded to it. Conscious, indeed, that innocence was gone, and evil motive could rule, he still trusts to himself to screen and rectify his disgrace. The expedient he adopted satisfied his own moral sense, and, what was infinitely more delusive, the moral sense of the one whose good opinion he loved to secure, and whose satisfaction was a bulwark to his own. This is a snare that few, even godly men, escape. It is, in other words, the reputation with one’s friends; pressed on the conscience as the verdict of the last court of appeal, and conclusive to it on any recurrence of anxious enquiry. There is a reciprocity

in this kind of reputation. What you admit to me, I in return admit for you. If a girdle of fig-leaves measures the demands of *your* moral sense, and you accept it as sufficient for *me*, I in return do the same for *you*. This is the essence and true character of all human and religious reputation. But the voice of God sounds, and Adam is troubled in his deceitfully serene and false position. That voice probes the entire condition, and at last he finds himself "naked and opened before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." He confesses all, and he is on the uppermost form for instruction with an humble and a contrite spirit. To the divine challenge he admits (though with an excuse and mitigation) that he was tempted and had eaten. His justification lowers him morally more than the charge he seeks to justify. Yet it is a confession, and it is accepted as such; and our God enters on the gracious work of unfolding His counsels. To each actor in this wondrous scene is now meted the judgment

due to the part he has played in it. *Satan's* sentence is first pronounced, and while *his* doom is fixed, the deliverance from his power and the eternal remedy of the gospel is declared to the listening and convicted Adam. It is the divine way, in restoring a soul, to establish it *first* in the power of God, and in His grace. The draught of the fishes and the words of Jesus taught this to Peter. It is the ground work for all godly improvement. When the heart is established, as David's was, ("the Lord has taken away thy sin,") then it can bear to hear what is the discipline necessary to correct that in him which sin could act on. It is important to carry with us the process by which the Lord reveals to the soul the discipline which He will impose. Whatever has provoked our failure is denounced, not in general terms, but in the proportion, and in the order too, of its guilt; at the same time commanding and promising the true mode of deliverance. Satan is not only sentenced, but the effect of his malice on man will be his own irremediable

retribution. Man shall be avenged of his enemy. The serpent is not only assigned, as a signal judgment, to crawl and to eat dust, in perpetual hostility to the lord of the creation, but its "violent dealing shall come down on its own pate;" its head shall be bruised. The next brought up for judgment is the *woman*. She was the proximate cause of Adam's failure; but as the principal had received his sentence, she must now hear hers. She is condemned to times of great sorrow on every addition to the human family which she has been instrumental in subjecting to the power of death; with unconditional subjection to her husband, the want of which bore its first-fruits in her own fall, and led to Adam's also. Each transgressor is not only sentenced to a penalty corresponding to his guilt, but the relation in which that guilt has affected Adam is also markedly repaired. God's servant must not be touched with impunity, but he must not err himself. The righteous God will avenge his cause, but only in *righteousness*. He cannot

overlook the frailty of His servant, though He will rescue him when the unmitigated sentence is executed. When God enters into judgment, even-handed justice is dispensed. But acts are criminal in a greater or less degree: that which implicates God's witness in distance from Him being more so than the failure which that witness evinces by being drawn into distance. The one who misleads another comes under a severer penalty than he who is misled; though he is not exempted because he discovers moral feebleness. The infliction of penalties are not necessarily for correction, nor is the discipline. There was no hope of amending Satan, but yet severe penalties are inflicted on him because Adam had suffered from him. Man was God's representative on earth; injury to him was treason against God. Hence in divine discipline there is always a correction of the evil principle of nature, and also correction for the trespass we may have committed on our fellow-man. This is exemplified in the sentence on Adam. His sin was yielding to his

wife's request in opposition to the word of God. Probably he did not do so with intent ; that is, not after weighing both he decided in favour of the former. But the word was not hid in his heart, and did not control him ; for if it had been he would not have hearkened to the voice of his wife. But having surrendered his place, he is to bear the penalty of it, and become the great slave and labourer on the earth, of which he was the ruler and prince. Everything on it would bear indications of insubjection to its rightful master. To assuage the evil, he should spend his life and live thereby ; but in the end return to dust, as dust he was. There is deeply instructive teaching in all this ; even that if we surrender the position in which God places us in any relation, the one we retire to will inevitably notify to us, in fearful remiscences, what has been our forfeiture. The smallest thorn and briar reminded Adam that he had surrendered his lordship in hearkening to the voice of his wife. If David retires from the duties of the king, he must surrender, in a

painful way, the honours of one. He is reminded how lightly he regarded them by the successful rebellion of his own son. "Cursed be he who doeth the work of the Lord negligently." All the influence of Barnabas would not induce Paul to take Mark who had returned from Pamphylia. The refusal of the apostle reminded him how he trifled with and abandoned the post once his, but easier lost than regained. This is the nature of Adam's discipline. He is reminded by everything of what he surrendered, and the less carefully and diligently he laboured to subdue the numerous reminiscences of his failure, the more they increased, and the less able was he to sustain himself against them. By the sweat of his brow he regained his position for his own need. David returned, after a severe campaign, to the throne. Mark was profitable for the ministry after the discipline had produced its effect. Faith always walks above discipline, though walking under it. Adam hears the sentence on all, and, in faith consenting to it, rises above it, and calls

his wife's name Eve, because she is "the mother of all living." Faith reaches unto God, therefore it can submit to the position which judicially and correctively falls to an erring soul, and looks to God for His own time and mode of deliverance. It accepts the punishment of its iniquity, not as retribution for it, but as correction. Discipline has in fact produced its greatest effect where the soul submits to it as trusting in God. Adam shows this in making amends to his wife (in thus naming her) for his former reproaches; and what was, in unsubdued nature, the agent of harm to him is now, in the eye of faith, the channel of life. Adam, disciplined in faith, God clothes him, yet discipline must not be arrested nor reprieved. God drives out the man, and sends him to till the ground from whence he is taken, to find out what sort of a man he was, and to learn how his faith would sustain him.

It is in our immediate relations of life, in the innermost circle, where there is least reserve, we most truly disclose ourselves. A man who cannot rule

his *own house* how shall he take care of the Church of God? Power is more effective applied immediately than at a distance. If Adam is learning from his discipline, it ought to be seen in his power to avoid the evil for which he was suffering. It does not appear that he does; for *Eve* assumes the place of naming his eldest son, again losing sight of her own place, and again, beyond doubt, filling her first-born (which his name alone would suggest) with aspirations which led to his fearful contradiction of it, as well as the painful evidence of her own misapprehension of God's promise. The introduction of death where life was expected; the fact that one child was murdered and the other the murderer; the one in whom their hopes centred must have been a trial to Adam that we can little conceive—a discipline which had its effects—for though it is said that *Eve* named Seth in the first instance, yet it is also written that *Adam* called his name Seth, showing, as it appears to me, that he at length had learned what the discipline was sent

to teach him, namely, to act for God, above all influence, and not to allow any influence to distract him from the path of faith. He appears to have learned this in the last recorded act of his life, a very pleasing consummation, showing the effect of discipline; and a very fit and happy finale to his history. To sum up, we learn from this history that innocence or absence of evil motive is no safeguard *against* influence. That satisfying our own moral sense, or the moral sense of any one else, is no proof that we can answer, or have answered, to God's claim on us. That if we cease to maintain our divinely appointed place, we are sure to fall, and the word of God, which would have preserved us in our place, does not act on the heart outside that place. But that learning to follow our own inclinations, our discipline will always be of a character to correct our failure, and to remind us, in very minute ways, (as did the thorns to Adam,) what our frailty has reduced us to.

Lastly, when discipline has effected its object, our history closes.

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS.

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content.” (Phil. iv, 11.)

There is a secret of happiness which none but a Christian possesses, and which a Christian possesses in its full power only when he is living in communion with God, in the region of faith. “I know,” says the apostle, “both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Now, this principle depends for its strength on the certainty that God’s will cannot be defeated, and that His will arranges everything for the best for those who commit their way to Him. It also depends on the apprehension of the resources of our happiness being all in Christ, independent of all the circumstances which may affect the Christian in this world. Things in the world may be all confusion, and things in the Church may

appear to be but little better, but this is not sufficient to destroy, or even to neutralize, the power of that principle of happiness of which the apostle speaks. God's counsels cannot be defeated—the ends of Christ's death cannot be frustrated—and the springs of the happiness of a risen man in Christ do not ebb and flow with the changing circumstances which may chequer his earthly course. If outward prosperity makes me happy, it is plain my happiness does not spring entirely from the will of God; if, on the other hand, when things go contrary, I lose my enjoyment, it is plain that all my happiness has not been based on the will of God, which is always perfect. Christ's love never changes; His relationship to His Church never alters; the hope of His coming abides till His coming makes it no longer a hope; and, more than all, His present care of me, and of all that connects itself with the eternal good of His Church, is daily exercised.

Then why am I unhappy? Why am I downcast? Is it not because I want

things, through my own selfishness, either in the world or in the Church, different from what Christ wills them? For, if Christ be the object of my heart, I have the certainty of God's eternal counsels concerning the glory of Christ for the ground of my assurance that I can never fail in the object I pursue.

It may be a hard lesson for such hearts as ours to be satisfied with this "secret of happiness;" but as there is no other for the servant of Christ, so is it unailing where the heart is committed to it, and to it alone.

People little suspect that all the secret of their unhappiness is in their own hearts, and not in the circumstances through which they are called to pass. If the world or self occupies any place which belongs to Christ, this principle of happiness will always be weakened, since no theory of the truth will ever keep the heart happy, without the power of the Holy Ghost. But Christ, and not the world, or the cravings of nature, or the pride of life, is the staple by which is pro-

duced in the soul the joy of the Holy Ghost.

I must learn to be dead to the world, if I am to live the life of Christ. But this is not the happiness of indifference, it is but the allowing God to have His place in wisdom, in goodness, and in the immutability of His counsels of grace in Christ Jesus. There may be exercises of soul with regard to the service of Christ in His Church or in the world; but then these exercises, so far from destroying my happiness, only carry me to Him who gives me rest in the knowledge that it is His care and His power that accomplishes everything; and that I have nothing to do but to follow His will, which can never fail. Christ was so sufficient for the apostle's soul, amidst dangers and difficulties, and wasting labours, and apparent discomfiture, that he wanted nothing else, and He is equally sufficient for you and me. And if we cannot in a moment leap up to this position practically, because we have been living at such a distance from God, and because

Christ has been so little the object of our souls, and the power of our walk, it is, nevertheless, a great thing to see clearly where the "secret of our happiness" is, and where the "secret" of our weakness and unhappiness lies.

THE WORD OF EXHORTATION.

I propose to consider the exhortations of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as suggested by the passage in chapter xiii, 22: "I beseech you, brethren, suffer *the word of exhortation*; for I have written unto you a letter in few words." In this passage the whole epistle appears to be designated, "the word of exhortation;" and the peculiar structure of the epistle is confirmatory of the thought.

The ordinary form of the epistles of Paul is the presentation, in an orderly and consecutive way, of, first, the doctrine of the epistle, and then of the practical exhortations. But in this

epistle it is otherwise, as exhortation runs throughout; and there is not an important doctrine stated, or subject introduced, without having grafted upon it its appropriate exhortation. There is only one exception to this, connected with the subject of the priesthood of Christ, which is pursued from the seventh chapter to the middle of the tenth chapter without a break, or the introduction of any exhortation at all, until the close of the subject. This exception is striking and full of instruction, as will be seen when we reach that part of the epistle.

As to the general subject of the epistle, it is God's exposition of the grounds of the setting aside of a religion of ordinances, which had originally the divine sanction, by the introduction of that which is distinctive of Christianity. It is therefore addressed to the only people who were ever possessed of a ritual service and a priesthood and ordinances appointed by God. This truth is thus briefly stated, chapter ix, 1: "Then, verily, the first [covenant] had

ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary ;” and it was with regard to the establishment of this that Moses was thus admonished : “ See [that] thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.”

Now a divinely established ritual—a worship which had, in every respect, the sanction of God—could not be rudely and arbitrarily set aside, and those who possessed it be called upon to leave it all, without any ground for doing so but simply the divine command. The grounds of this subversion must necessarily be presented in order to afford the basis of faith for the worshippers ; and the mind must be satisfied that the introduction of that which was new was but the accomplishment of that which, up to this time, had claimed the obedience of the worshippers ; and was thus but the full exhibition of the counsels of God, to which the dispensation which was now passing away pointed as an index in the way of shadows and types. The apostle says,

“The law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.” This is important; because whenever man seeks to set up a religion, or to establish a worship, which has not a risen Christ for its centre, and the Holy Ghost as its power, it is invariably composed of these very ordinances, or the like, which by the coming, and work, and sacrifice, and priesthood of Christ, the Spirit of God by this epistle shows to have been for ever set aside. If ordinances, which had a divine sanction, are thus set aside, and called “beggarly elements,” what must be the folly and sin of men who seek to set up a system of ordinances without any divine sanction at all, or to return to those which, under the solemn teaching of God’s Spirit, are declared to have for ever passed away? Every attempt to set up again the efficacy of ordinances, and the power of a priesthood, which is the essence of Popery and Puseyism, is in direct contradiction to the whole purpose of God’s Spirit in this epistle, and a virtual denial of the efficacy of

Christ's sacrifice and heavenly priesthood.

But there is another general remark which may be necessary in order to the right understanding of those solemn warnings presented in the sixth and tenth chapters of the epistle: namely, that the epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to a *body* of persons who had ostensibly left Judaism, and were under the responsibility of the profession of Christianity. Now if a *body* is addressed in connexion with a given profession, it is plain that there may be departure from it in the way of apostasy, and which thus may open the door for the most solemn warnings against such a departure, but which nevertheless were never meant to weaken the grounds of individual salvation, which rest entirely and absolutely on the finished work of Christ. For example, in connexion with the warnings of the sixth chapter, the apostle says, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

And again, at the close of the warnings of the tenth chapter, he says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward;" and again, verse 39, "We are not of them which draw back unto perdition, but of them which believe unto the saving of the soul." But see especially chapter vi, 16—20, "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, [even] Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

A *body* may be apostate from the

truth, and may therefore come under the threatening of excision and judgment, while the individual believer is built up in his "most holy faith:" see the epistle of Jude. Moreover, in these warnings, that passage of scripture is accomplished, "The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished." In other words, believers through grace heed the warnings, and escape the consequences of the neglect of them, while others remain in security in "the forms of godliness without the power," and perish. But they perish not unwarned.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the epistle is not occupied in unfolding, for the first time, the primary truths of Christianity, like the epistle to the Romans; but is rather designed to fortify the faith which was failing, and to restore the footsteps which were already slipping back, as is seen in chap. x, 32: "Call to remembrance the former days in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions," &c.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

JOYING IN GOD, AND WAITING FOR CHRIST.

2 Thess. iii, 5.

There are two things which constitute the joy of a Christian, to be his strength on the road, and the object constantly before his heart. The first is, the hope of the coming of the Lord; and the second is, present communion and fellowship with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these two cannot be separated without loss to our souls; for we cannot have all the profit without both of them. If we are not looking for the coming of the Lord, there is nothing whatever that can separate us in the same way from this present evil world; neither will Christ Himself be so much the object before the soul; nor yet shall we be able, in the same measure, to apprehend the mind and counsels of God about the world.

Again, if this hope be looked at apart from present communion and fellowship with God, we shall not have

present power, the heart being enfeebled from the mind being too much occupied and overborne by the evil around; for we cannot be really looking for God's Son from heaven without, at the same time, seeing the world's utter rejection of Him, and that the world itself is going wrong; its wise men having no wisdom, and all going on to judgment; the principles of evil loosening all bonds, &c.; and the soul becomes oppressed and the heart sad; but if, through grace, the Christian is in present communion and fellowship with God, his soul stands steady, and is calm and happy before God, because there is a fund of blessing in Him which no circumstances can ever touch or change. The evil tidings are heard, the sorrow is seen, but his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, which carries him far above every circumstance. Brethren, we all want this. To walk steadily with God we need both this fellowship and this hope.

I do not believe that a Christian can

have his heart scripturally right unless he is looking for God's Son from heaven. There could be no such thing as attempting to set the world right if its sin in rejecting Christ were fully seen; and, moreover, there never will be a correct judgment formed of the character of the world until that crowning sin be apprehended by the soul. To a Christian who is looking and waiting for Christ to come from heaven, Christ Himself is unspeakably more the object before the soul. It is not only that I shall get to heaven and be happy, but that the Lord Himself is coming from heaven for me, and all the Church with me. It is this that gives its character to the joy of the saint. As Christ Himself says, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also"—when I find my delight, then shall you find yours also, I with you, and you with me,—
"For ever with the Lord." You may think to find good, or to produce good in man, but you will never find waiting for Christ in man. In the world, the

first Adam may be cultivated, but it is the first Adam still; the second Adam will never be found there, being rejected by the world. And it is the looking for this rejected Lord which stamps the whole character and walk of the saints.

Then again, there is another thing connected with my waiting for God's Son from heaven. I have not yet got the Person with me I love, and while waiting for Him I am going through the world tired and worn with the spirit and character of everything around me; and the more I am in communion with God the more keenly shall I feel the spirit of the world to be a weariness to me, although God still upholds my soul in fellowship and communion with Himself. Therefore Paul says, in 2 Thess. i: "To you who are troubled, rest with us." So then I get rest to my spirit now in waiting for Christ, knowing that when He comes He will have everything His own way. For the coming of the Lord, which will be trouble to the world, will be to the

saints full and everlasting rest. Still, it is not that we are to be "weary and faint in our minds." It is not a right thing to be weary of the service and conflict. O, no! rather let us be victorious every day. Still, it is not rest to be fighting.

However, when walking with God, it is not so much thinking of combat, as joying in God Himself. This I shall know all the better when I am in the glory; my soul will be enlarged, and more capable of enjoying what God really is; but it is the same kind of joy I have now as I shall have when He comes to be glorified in His saints; only greater in degree. And if this joy in God is now in my soul, in power, it hides the world from me altogether, and becomes a spring of love to those in the world. For though I may be tired of the combat, still, I feel there are people in the world that need the love I enjoy, and I desire that they should possess it; as it is the joy of what God is for me that sustains me, and carries me through all the conflict.

So that our souls should be exercised on both the fellowship and the hope; for if I look for Christ's coming apart from this fellowship and communion with God, I shall be oppressed, and shall not go steadily and properly on. When the love of God fills my heart, it flows out towards all those that have need of it, towards saints and sinners according to their need; for if I feel the exercise of the power of this love in my heart, I shall be going out to serve others; as it is the power of this love that enables me to go through the toil and labour of service, from that attachment to Christ which leads to service, though through suffering for His sake. If my soul is wrapped up in the second Adam, attachment to Christ puts its right stamp upon all that is of the first Adam.

When this love has led out into active service, then the conflict, doubtless, will be found, as in the first chapter of second Corinthians: there it is present blessing in the midst of trial. But in the first chapter of second

Thessalonians, it is tribulation, and not rest out of it, until the Lord comes; "that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." In 2 Cor. i, 3, 4, there is present blessing in the midst of the trial,—“who comforteth us in all our tribulation;” so that if the sufferings for Christ’s sake be ours, there is, at the same time, the comfortings of God in the soul. How rich a spring of blessing is this in return for this poor little trouble of mine! I get God pouring into my soul the revelation of Himself; I get God communicating Himself to my soul; for it is really that. I find it to be a present thing; it comes home to me, to my heart, the very joy of God, God delighting in me, and I in God. He identifies Himself with those who suffer for Him. There is no time for God’s coming into a soul like the time of trial, for in no way does He so fully reveal Himself to the soul as when He is exercising it in trial. There is astonishing power in this; for the amazing power with

which Christ is to us present power and consolation is by His coming in, in present living power, even whilst these poor mortal bodies are unchanged. Our bodies are not yet redeemed with power, though they are bought with a price; but we have in Christ the life and the power; and, in spite of all, God is pouring in these consolations when we are in tribulation, showing the kind of power in Christ by which I am lifted up above every circumstance of trial. "The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

CHRIST IN EVERYTHING.

Philemon.

It is interesting to remark, in the Epistles, the way in which the Spirit of God enters into every minute thing that concerns us. Not like the prophets of old, such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, &c., who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, with a "Thus saith the Lord;" and they had to learn and

enquire about the things of which they spake. In the Prophets the Spirit of God is communicating a certain message, and this is occasionally seen in the Epistles, as in 2 Thess. ii, for example; but in the Epistles (I am not here speaking of the Apocalypse) it is not so much a message delivered, but the Spirit of God down here, as being the soul of the body of the Church, entering into everything. Paul tells out all his thoughts, his affections, his consolations, and all that he feels. He not merely gives the details of Church order and discipline, but all the sympathies and trials of every day domestic life. Take this epistle to Philemon, for instance, where the Spirit enters into all circumstances of receiving back a runaway slave, who had run away from his master; and tells us in what spirit he is to be received back by his master. The Holy Ghost leads into the high and deep counsels of God, and also into all the minute details of the saints' walk down here. "Christ that descended is the same also that ascended

up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." The Holy Ghost therefore enters into them all, that He may bring them into the every-day walk of the saints; not by way of message sent to men, like the prophets of old; nor yet as servants, by way of commandment; but by entering into us as sons. For the Son of God having passed sinlessly through all the circumstances down here, the Holy Ghost enters into them also, that He may show them unto us in every difficulty through which we may be called to pass. And this it is which forms part of Christ's glory. Were it not so, as human beings, men down here, we should be without Christ. But thus the Holy Ghost consecrates the whole heart, thoughts, and ways of a man to God in Christ. While unfolding and bringing us into connexion with all the riches of God's counsels, it is remarkable how the Spirit of God connects those mightiest things with the most minute. We are so thoroughly and entirely brought into the new

creation, being dead and risen with Christ, that we cannot properly touch a single subject without bringing Christ into it. See the word to servants in Titus ii, 10: "Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." This shows the way in which the Holy Ghost enters into everything, bringing into every detail the fulness of Christ; thus humbling the man, and yet exalting him, too, as partaker with Christ. It is in virtue of this connexion with Christ that every direction is given as to the long hair and head-dresses of the women, in connexion with Headship. "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." So also the servants' not purloining is in connexion with "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." Again, when the mind of the Lord is given as to women speaking in the Church, the whole mind and thoughts of God about Adam and Eve are brought out.

If we look into the word of God, we shall be astonished at the way in which the Spirit of God takes the soul up to Christ, and uses Him in all these things that are brought out in the New Testament.

BOLDNESS TO ENTER INTO THE HOLIEST BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

Hebrews x.

The gospel sets the conscience at rest, and gives perfect peace with God. God made man upright, and so there ever is in man a clinging to goodness. But the fact is, that the more upright I am while under the law the less hope I have; though where the Spirit of God is working there is always a glimmer of hope. Yet we must remember that the gospel is not setting *hope* before a man, but actually revealing salvation. The gospel so perfectly sets the conscience at rest, while bringing into the very presence of God, that while we

see that we are utterly lost, we see also that the perfect answer is given by God to the conscience; and the sinner, once condemned, is brought to God, standing in perfect righteousness.

To bring the conscience into the presence of God it must be perfect. God cannot brook sin, and an unpurged conscience cannot stand in His presence. So there never can be perfect peace until it is understood that the question of righteousness is settled; only then is unhindered communion established. But then how blessed! Stumbling as we are, failing as we are, in conflict as we may be, between us and God there is not a cloud, not a question. We joy in God! It is not a question, then, of seeing whether a man can be presently saved—whether we can *get* a standing before God; we are set there on the ground of what Christ is, in the unclouded brightness of the presence of God.

Dear reader, let me ask you, Is your conscience purged in the presence of God? If it is, you do not want help

to stand in the presence of God to-morrow; you are there to-day. Your privilege is to be spotless before God now. When brought there how happy we are, how blessed! His own grace has brought us near to Himself, and set us there cleansed. Boldness is given us to enter into His presence,—into the holiest of all. How do we get there? Because “He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” “By himself he has purged our sins.” If done by Himself, how perfectly done! By Himself we enter, through the rent veil.

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ has so entirely put away the sin that I was guilty of, that I enter into God’s presence. God has been glorified by my entrance there, by the putting away of my sin. It is by virtue of the sacrifice that I am in the presence of God. And what is its virtue? The putting away of sin. There is no more memorial of sin before God. What is there, then, before God? Christ is there. There is always a memorial of

righteousness. I, too, am there by virtue of an eternal righteousness before God, a righteousness which enables to enter heaven itself, and not only this, but which enables to enjoy God Himself. There the soul gets confidence, and learns how God has ordered everything for the soul's enjoyment of Himself. There righteousness gives strength to enjoy His love; the love that brought me there, and brought me, too, with an unclouded conscience. The heart that knows this cannot do without Him,—“we joy in God:” and the result is we want to walk with Him. He gives an eternal redemption, an eternal righteousness. I not only get peace, but rest. I not only live by Him, but walk with Him; and, abiding in His presence, walk in the light, knowing that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. The high priest stood because his work was not perfect; Jesus sat down, and I am at rest. Where? In the presence of God, and by that which rent the veil, the blood-shedding of Jesus.

And now I am not waiting to have my conscience purged, but waiting for Jesus from heaven.

You will know no rest, until you have no hope left of being better to-morrow than you are to-day. When the conscience and God come together, and not till then do we know that we are saved. This is the ground of walk with God. For communion is interrupted by sin. A light thought cannot be had in communion with God.

It is the blood that makes the conscience perfect. Has not God accepted Christ? I go with His blood before God, and I am cleansed, and I worship and adore God. He saw me a slave to sin and Satan, and redeemed me. I am in the house by virtue of what He has done. I never should have been there had He not washed me in the blood of the Lamb. I should have fled from God. But He brought me in; not in my rags, but in the very best robe; and I got rest, and peace, and joy, because God has given me all that is good in Christ, and put out of my

sight all that is bad in me. The Lord give us to know how to abide in His presence. In this lies the secret of all strength.

PLANTING IN GRACE.

Ephesians ii.

The planting of the soul in grace is the withering of the principle of legality. The principle of blessing for service is really horrible. Am I never to do an action but to one who deserves it? Is the blessing God gives to be measured by what I deserve? What I deserve is condemnation, and the knowledge of this by the Holy Ghost withers up this self-righteousness, and throws me over on grace. Thus I get to know God.

In the first three verses of this chapter we get our whole history, all that we were according to God. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world." This world is Satan's world, and now it is given up to judg-

ment. The condemnation of the world is a settled thing. In 1 Cor. xi, it is said that believers are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. The world is thus a *finally condemned thing*; and *this too* since Christianity began. For until Christ was rejected, God was going on with the world; but the crucifixion of His Son proved, that *by nature* men were *children of wrath*. Then again, we were, besides, under the power of Satan, and fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Well, it is all this that casts us upon God. And what we want is to be cast upon God. When we are entirely thrown upon God, He takes us out of the whole thing.

This is what we get in the fourth verse. There the apostle turns at once over to the other end, passing over regeneration, &c., and showing another spring of blessing altogether. He turns the eye away from everything in man, and shows us what God is. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved

us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." First, we have God rich in mercy; and then the power by which He has quickened us together with Christ; Christ being looked at as dead for our sins. What He has done for me in Christ is the way I come to know what God is, and I delight in it. I delight in what God is: of course, I must have the nature to understand it—love; this we have, and so we understand that what God is for us is love. The more we are cleared from mere nature, the more we understand Christ's ways, why He did things, and how He did things. What was He in the world? Why? Everybody's servant, no matter what they were. Dear me! I say, Is this God? Yes! He hath declared Him. What a new set of thoughts and feelings this produces in the soul! God's nature becomes worked into it. There is an individual link of the soul with God; and it is life eternal to know God thus. It may be that a person cannot explain it, but

he has got it. It is a kind of reasoning for which human reasoning is not a match. Thus the soul comes to know the wondrous blessed harmony of what God is for itself, because, in Christ, He has condescended to every want and weakness.

In the end of the chapter we have the Spirit as the power by which we have access through Christ to the Father, with all this revelation of God, full unhindered intercourse with Him. It is the Spirit of God who reveals God's nature to me and in me, and so makes my heart answer to the love of God, for God is love. And just as the love comes down, my heart goes up. What a divine character of communion! It is true worship. It is the divine up-flowing answer to divine down-flowing love.

And besides this individual communion with God, we are indissolubly united to one Head,—“builded together in him for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Thus there is unity and fellowship. Thus every in-

dividual is indissolubly bound to every other. You have not one Holy Ghost and I another. So far as I have life in Christ, I have it for myself, and not for another, but it is the same Holy Ghost in all. As there is one soul in the body, so there is one Holy Ghost in the body.

Thus God has wrought in us individually, and, besides, by one Spirit builded us together. He has awakened and created us anew by this glowing and blessed revelation of Himself. What a thing it is to know God in this way!

What is especially important is this individual communion with God; and we grow in this by studying that which produces it, what God is in Christ.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy.” (Prov. xxviii, 13.)

“THE WORD OF EXHORTATION.”

Hebrews i—iv.

(Continued from page 75.)

It is not the exposition of the doctrines of the epistle that is here pursued, but the exhortations founded upon the doctrines.

The deductions from scripture and practical exhortations of the most devoted and spiritual may sometimes be wide of the mark, or at least may fail to present that which is the real point of importance; but in the exhortations and deductions we are about to follow, the Spirit of God has, in each case, without question, presented the very point of truth it is of the deepest moment for our souls to heed, and the absolute practical use which should be made of each of the various statements that are presented in the epistle.

As to the exhortation itself, it commences at chap. ii, verse 1,—“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest

heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" This exhortation naturally flows from the subject of the first chapter, which is the presentation of the dignity and intrinsic glory of the person of God's Son, by whom the mind of God is now communicated. For He "hath in these last days spoken to us by *his Son.*" But it will be observed that all that is here ascribed to the Son is ascribed to Him as the man who had been known here on earth in humiliation, and sorrow, and death; but who in truth was the Prophet from among their brethren, whom God had

raised up unto them. It is the opposite point of presentation to that which is given in the first chapter of John. There it is what He was essentially from the beginning, before He was manifested in humiliation. Here it is the ascription of all that was true there, to Him who was known as sojourning here on earth; whose glory was hidden when here below, but is now unveiled, that we may know WHO it is by whom God has spoken, and by whose faithfulness and worth the glory of God has been accomplished, and the salvation and blessing of His people eternally secured.

Formerly God had spoken by His prophets, and their message was invested with all the authority of the word of the Lord; but now it is the SON who takes the place of Prophet, or communicator of God's mind. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." "God has in these last days spoken to us by his Son."

One who was far above prophets, and above angels (as is argued in the chapter) the appointed heir of all things, as He is the maker and upholder of all things, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person. *He* it is by whom God now speaks, and His dignity and glory, as well as the subject of His communications, demand for Him a solemn and heedful attention. It is not of judgment that God now speaks, as in the days of Noah, nor of the requisitions of His holiness, as in the fiery law which was given through the mediation of Moses, but it is of accomplished salvation that He speaks by His Son. For it was "when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high;" thus attaching all the dignity and glory of His person to the work He has accomplished, (so giving eternal rest to our souls,) as well as to the message He delivers, and thus investing it with supreme authority. "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the

things which we have heard. There is a double principle of responsibility here, that which belongs to all men who have heard the gospel—for God has spoken by His *Son*, and man's carelessness cannot undo that—and He will hold them responsible for the acceptance or rejection of the message He has delivered. "For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be *spoken by THE LORD.*" But there is also that which belongs to those who have believed, that they give a heedful attention to the things which they have heard, that they may retain, in all their brightness, and in all their force, by the power of faith, the things which they have heard, and which have been thus communicated. Let the one and the other think what they are doing if, either in whole or in part, they are neglecting this great salvation. A salvation, as it is insisted on, which first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by the apostles, God also giving His attestation, and the

Holy Ghost setting His seal to its proclamation, by the wonders that He wrought.

Let me ask, Is there no need for this exhortation? What can be thought of the fate of the man who neglects what God, by His own Son, has proclaimed? What the condition of him who neglects a salvation that could alone be accomplished by the mission, and sorrows, and sufferings, and death of God's Son? What also the folly of the believer who, through negligence, or worldliness, or the indulgence of the flesh, allows these bright and blessed revelations to escape from his mind? Does not the condition of those who profess the gospel merely, and in great part of those by whom it has been received, through grace, proclaim aloud the deep necessity for this exhortation to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip?

God will vindicate His word when spoken by angels; but much more will He visit for the outraged dignity and the

rejected love of His Son; for the despisal of that grace which flows alone from His glory, His sufferings, and His death!

It is a serious thing for men to neglect their *own salvation*, and it is a legitimate thing to reason with them on the hopelessness of the condition, which such a neglect involves. But there is something deeper than this presented here; it is the neglect of *God's* salvation; the neglect of that intervention of mercy, which can alone render it possible for any sinner to appear in the presence of God. This is another idea than the neglect of my own well-being. It is the neglect of God, of His glory, of His holiness, of His authority, of His grace, of His love, of the provisions of His mercy, the neglect of the salvation accomplished in sorrow and suffering, by His only begotten Son, and is now proclaimed, through the testimony of the Holy Ghost, sent down from above.

But if the dignity of the Son, as the

communicator of God's mind, forms the basis of the exhortation to give a more earnest heed to the things which He has spoken; the grace of His heart, in associating those with Himself of whom He is the Captain of salvation—their rightful deliverer—is the ground of the exhortation, to consider Him who sustains for them the offices of Apostle and High Priest.

He who, in the world to come, or in the habitable earth in a future age, is to be set, as the Son of man, supreme over all the works of God's hands, reaches this place of exaltation, through suffering, and humiliation, and death. Not that He personally needed this, but if He is to associate others with Him, if He is to bring many sons to glory, He must, as the Captain of their salvation, be made perfect through sufferings. For there was that to be met, which the holiness of God and the claims of His justice required, as well as the accomplishment of the results of grace, in bringing many sons to glory. Hence it is said, that "he

who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." He so accomplished His work that the sanctified are brought into the same position as Himself, who is the sanctifier. There is one sanctification for Him and for them; for the holiness of God's presence could admit of no other standard. He is the accomplisher of this sanctification; believers are the participants of it; but it is the same sanctification, or setting apart, and on the same grounds. Hence the Lord says, in John xvii, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be truly sanctified." Wondrous position! Wondrous grace! But "it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Thus alone it is that He can call them brethren. He came down in grace to their condition that He might raise them to His. The children were partakers of flesh and

blood; and He partakes of flesh and blood. We were under the power of sin; and He *Himself* purged our sins. We were under the power of death, and He submits Himself to that power; and in the very domain of death conquers for us; and by His resurrection delivers from the fear of death those who were subject to its bondage. In grace, He who, as the Son, was all that the first chapter declares, "was in all points made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." It behoved Him to take this place, that He might maintain our position before God, and, in sympathy, minister the needed grace to us here below.

On all this is based the exhortation, "wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

This title of "holy brethren" is thus bestowed on all believers, and its force is seen by a reference to the 11th and 12th verses of the chapter,

where it is said of Christ, that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren.*" This declaration of God's name, by Christ, to His brethren, is presented in its wondrous bearing by the Lord when, after He was risen from the dead, He said to Mary Magdalene, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto *my* Father and *your* Father, unto *my* God and *your* God." This is the blessed title of the relationship which God bears toward every poor sinner saved through the grace of Christ. It is no place of assumption for believers, nor is it a title to which attainments may give a claim. It is the place and title which Christ's grace establishes for those who know Him in the reality of His sufferings, His humiliation, and death. The position of Him whose calling they obey gives its character to theirs, whether viewed in relation to their inheritance above, or to their sojourn here below. It is not an earthly, but a heavenly calling that believers are brought into by Christ.

Called from earth to heaven, they are to know the place of Him who is the Captain of their salvation and the first-born among many brethren.

The exhortation is to consider Christ in the two offices which are here expressed, the apostle and high priest of our profession, offices which are shadowed forth by the position toward Israel of Moses and Aaron. The profession of Christianity, in distinction from the law, is based upon the fact that God has spoken to us from heaven, through Christ, who is the apostle of our profession; and that we have a High Priest in heaven who accomplished eternal redemption by His own blood-shedding while here on earth. The point of the exhortation is to consider *who* it is that sustains these offices, and *how competent He* is to the discharge of all which they imply. He was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as Moses was faithful; but He was as much above Moses as the owner of the house is higher than he who is but a servant, though faithful, in the

house. Christ was the builder of the house, and thus has more honour than the house. He was the builder of all things; and "He that built all things is God." Thus, by the simplest human footsteps, (if I may so speak,) are we led upward to see this blessed lowly One, who was not ashamed to call us brethren, sustaining the office of apostle, or communicator of God's mind, and the High Priest of our profession, as bringing us into God's presence by virtue of His accomplished sacrifice, not merely as "a son over his own house," the Head and Lord of that house; but as the sovereign Creator of all things, the eternal God!

These offices were familiar to the Hebrews; they had their typical presentation in Moses, the prophet of the Lord, and in Aaron, who was the consecrated high priest; but they are now sustained by Him who is at once in grace the first-born among many brethren, and in intrinsic glory the Son of God, and Creator and upholder of all things.

Christ having been thus presented in these offices, of which Moses and Aaron presented the illustration, believers are at once viewed as morally in the wilderness, and on their journey to a future rest, as Israel, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, were travelling through the desert to the rest of Canaan. Redemption from Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea, in their immediate effect, only put the people of Israel in the wilderness; however they were journeying toward the promised rest. So the Hebrews are reminded that this higher redemption, by the blood of Christ, and His taking the place of immediate authority over them, in its present effect, is but to make them pilgrims through the world, in the hope and expectation of a future rest, of which Canaan was but a type. Thus the whole wilderness history of Israel, with its temptations and provocations, is made to bear on the position of the believer in the world; and lessons of practical warning, in the contemplation of that his-

tory, rise up at every step. For “these things happened to them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come.” But the two special points of exhortation here selected are against *unbelief and sin*; and unbelief comes first. These were the two evils which shut Israel out of Canaan, and caused their carcasses to fall in the wilderness. The effect of unbelief is noted in the core of its baneful effect, as leading the soul to *depart from the living God*. It is the evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God. It is not said, an evil heart of unbelief which will hinder your progress, which will weaken you in conflict, which will bring leanness into your souls,—all these things will indeed result from the master effect of unbelief,—but that effect is described as leading to a *departure from the living God*. Israel’s whole strength in the desert was that God was with them; but unbelief lost sight of this great truth, and lost all the springs of strength which flow

from its recognition ; and it left its victims, as to their carcasses, to fall in the wilderness, instead of entering upon the pleasant land. But unbelief prepares the way for *sin* ; for if the sense of God's presence be lost, where is the check to the unbridled indulgence of the desires of a heart that is in its very character enmity against God.

“ In thy presence we are happy,
 In thy presence we're secure,
 In thy presence all afflictions
 We can easily endure.
 In thy presence we can conquer,
 We can suffer, we can die,
 Wandering from thee we are feeble,
 Let thy love then keep us nigh.”

But mutual exhortation is introduced in connexion with the danger of the heart being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. “ Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” The reason of this is plain, for if Israel be the congregation of the Lord, then each person of that congregation is responsible to guard against the power of sin. An

Israelite cannot sin alone. Achan may alone be occupied with the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment, but all Israel has to bear the consequence of his sin.

God's redemption and Christ's leadership set believers in a mutual relationship to one another; and it is this which gives its force to the exhortation, "exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

How correctly does the word of God delineate the effect of *unbelief*, in leading away from God's presence; and the character of *sin* as deceitful in its approaches, insidious in its advances, and, when yielded to, preparing for worse results by its hardening effect upon the soul! It is not the effect of sin merely that it deceives the heart into that which is contrary to God and its own peace, but it blinds and hardens against all that which the power of divine grace and the ungrieved Spirit of God would make it impassible to. In the wilderness, then, the

two great dangers are, *unbelief* and *sin*. Unbelief which carries out of God's presence, and sin which hardens the heart against all that is according to God, and necessarily brings His judgment.

But as the end of Israel's redemption was not the wilderness, but Canaan, though the wilderness must be passed through to reach it; so it is not in this world that the believer is to find his rest, but his hopes and his aims are to be directed onward to the rest that lies beyond. Hence, because there is this rest, which God has provided, we are led to the exhortation, (iv, 1,) "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." There is a promise left us of this rest, and the exhortation is designed to bring the heart so under the power of this promise as to induce the believer to be always journeying onward, until he reaches its accomplishment. As the apostle says, "one thing

I do, forgetting the 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."

Israel formerly were those who had the promise and the tidings of this rest—the rest of Canaan. Believers now are the persons that are entering upon this rest. As it is stated, "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them;" or, more properly, "we have been evangelized of a rest," "or have had the tidings announced of a rest, as well as they." In a word, believers have displaced Israel, as to the wilderness and Canaan, which were but types, and they are admonished not to follow Israel's example, who when they heard from the spies the tidings of the rest, refused to believe their report, and to go up and possess the land. "For we who have believed do enter into rest, as he said, I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest."

It is plain that it is not about the

gospel of salvation that the apostle is arguing in these verses, but is drawing a parallel between Israel's position and the believer's, in relation to a rest of which Canaan is taken as a type. But it is GOD's rest that is now in question; a rest that is worthy of God; a rest, not only for the believer himself, but in which God will participate. The sabbath rest, at the close of the works of creation, presented its first expression, though man through sin had never reached it. Still "the works were finished from the foundation of the world," and the intimation that God intended to associate those whom He blessed with Himself, in this rest, is expressed in the institution of the sabbath. Of Israel, in consequence of their unbelief, God swore that "*they* should not enter into His rest." But their not entering in did not set aside the rest itself, nor God's purpose in relation to it. Hence it is added, "seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not

in because of unbelief. Again He limiteth a certain day, saying, in David to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." This plainly shows, that Israel not only did not enter God's rest, however Canaan might be a type of it, but even Canaan itself is to be held, by the elect nation of God, by another tenure than that by which they possessed it as brought in to the land by Joshua. For there is a double bearing in the words "If Jesus (or Joshua, as it should be) had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day," as He does by David, many ages afterward, in the Psalms.

The issue of the argument, thus pursued, is this, that it was not the rest of creation that is in question, nor the rest of Canaan, but a rest that is still future, as it is expressed, "there remaineth therefore a rest (a sabbath rest) for the people of God." The great sabbath keeping of the people of God is yet future, and is thus set before us as the inspiring object of hope. It is

God's rest that is before us, and the thought of that rest may well quicken our course onward, through all the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness which is our present portion.

It need hardly be asserted, that the believer has not yet entered into God's final rest in glory; but the passage before us is often obscured by the introduction of the thought of there being more than one rest spoken of in this chapter. So far from this being the case, except as the sabbath and the rest of Canaan are used as prefigurements of it, the idea throughout is simply one, namely, that the believer has a future rest with God to be entered upon, as Israel had the hope of the rest of Canaan to animate them through the toils of the wilderness. Hence the consequences of Israel's want of faith, in regard to the hope of Canaan, are urged upon us, as a reason for never losing sight of that hope, which is given to encourage us in our course through the world. That the rest is future is argued from the very

condition of the believer. For if we had already entered on this rest, we should have ceased from our labours, as God rested from His works in creation, when the sabbath was come. But, instead of this being the case, we are in a condition to need the exhortation to diligence, in ever pressing toward it. "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

It is not salvation, or the rest of the soul in the finished work of Christ, that is here spoken of. For he says, "*we who have believed* do enter into rest;" that is, believers are the persons who are now entering upon that rest. The people of God are to be the possessors of it. Therefore, he exhorts the Hebrews, as believers, to labour toward that rest, and not to repeat the sad history of their fathers, who though called out of Egypt to the rest of Canaan, through unbelief came short of it.

"We are saved by hope;" and the

believer, whose course is not animated by its constant operation, in regard to the future rest of God, will assuredly in his course "*seem* to come short of it."

Would that there were less that is equivocal in our course, as to its final object! for, in very truth, the salvation of the soul may, through the grace of Christ, be secured; and the hope of heaven, as to individual happiness, may not be altogether absent; while, with regard to this final rest of God, there may be so little of the power of hope, that many a one may seem to come short of it.

But if unbelief and sin, and the effects of them, in Israel's coming short of Canaan, be noticed, and a warning raised for us on this foundation, it may be asked, by what means is such an issue to be avoided, in regard to those who are now in question? God has provided the means to prevent this issue. The word and the priesthood of Christ are introduced, in this connexion, as God's instruments for bringing His

people through the wilderness. The word reaches the very springs of unbelief and apostacy, and lays the soul bare under the all-searching eye of God. The priesthood of Christ is God's provision to meet the condition of those who are thus searched and convicted by the word, from the edge of which nothing can escape.

The law was sufficient to detect Israel's overt acts of apostacy, and to condemn that idolatry which was the expression of their departure from God; but the word, now, in its searching power, does not stop at the outward act, but reaches to the detection of every secret spring of action, every departure in heart or affection from the Lord, from which apostacy takes its rise, as it is written, "thou hast forsaken thy first love."

Believers have now to do with God's final revelation of His grace and holiness, and hence nothing that is contrary to the perfect light of God's presence can be allowed. "All things are made manifest and reprov'd by the

light." The law demanded holiness from man, in whose flesh dwelt no good thing, but as it did not minister righteousness or life, which man's condition required, in order to his having to do with God, the demand could not be met, and the curse of the law was the *only possible result*. But now the ministration of grace is in truth a ministration of righteousness, in order to deliverance from condemnation; and the ministration of life, through which we have not alone deliverance from death, but the participation of a nature from which holiness must be the issue and the result. "We are made partakers of the divine nature." Christ is our life.

Hence the word is presented in its absolute searching power, penetrating to the hidden recesses of the heart, dividing between the soul and spirit, discerning the very thoughts and intents of the heart. This is what the word of God is; and this is its action on the soul of the believer. It is the expression of God's living thoughts;

it is the instrument by which He makes His own presence felt. Hence the transition from the written word, and its searching power, as expressed in verse 12, to the immediate eye of God, in verse 13, where it is said, "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."

Now if this be the province of the word, and this the range of its searching power, plainly its detections will be such as to cast the soul into utter despair, if there were nothing found in the ministrations of grace to meet that which the word discovers in the soul. For what is this inquisition in the soul? It is the unmitigated demand, not only that there should be no wrong action, but no wrong affection, no thought of the mind, no intention of the heart, no affection in excess, but that all in the motives, and purposes, and aims of the soul, shall be such as to accord with the holiness of Him of whom it is said, that "God is light,

and in him is no darkness at all." The edge of this sword pierces through every subterfuge, defies the vain attempt which the heart often makes to disguise its motives, and, like the sacrificial knife, separates the very joints and marrow, and discovers every latent spring of action, laying bare every feeling which the heart would never have the courage to confess even to itself.

But this searching inquisition of the word, this inexorable scrutiny of the soul, in order that there may be truth in the inward parts, is the very ground for the necessity of the introduction of the priesthood of Christ. This is the moral connexion between the word and the priesthood of Christ, viewed in their practical bearing on the believer's walk in the presence of God.

It will be remembered that when the law had condemned, and when Israel's departures from the Lord had brought them under His judgment, and there seemed no other possible issue to their murmurings but, either the entire with-

drawal of God's presence from the camp, or their destruction, that God introduces the rod of Aaron's priesthood, which was the symbol of living and efficacious grace: as is seen in Numbers xvii, 10: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and *thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.*" For as Moses, the representative of the law, did not bring them into possession of the inheritance; but Joshua, the type of Christ as Captain of salvation; so neither was it the rod of power—even of God's power, which Moses wielded—but the rod of priesthood, Aaron's rod which budded, in which grace has its special exercise—that brings the people, in spite of all their provocations, through the wilderness. So is it now. It is the priesthood of Christ that gives practical power to walk with God in the requirements of His holiness, as well as imparts the grace that is needed to meet our un-

numbered failures, as brought to light by the power of that word by which we are searched.

Most interesting is it to see the difference of the two exhortations, based upon the two aspects of Him who sustains this priesthood. Verse 14, "Seeing that we have a *great high priest* that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, *let us hold fast our profession.*" Verses 15, 16, "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.*"

It is the greatness of the High Priest, and the place of the exercise of His priesthood, that are presented as the ground of the exhortation, "let us hold fast our profession." The high priest who sustains the ground of this profession is "Jesus, the SON OF GOD," who has passed into the heavens, to exercise His priesthood for us, in the

immediate presence of God. "For 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. . . . So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. . . . Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. v, 1, 5, 10.)

It has been shown that it is God with whom we have to do, and that it is in His presence, from which nothing can be hid, that we have to walk. And when the light of the word has shown us what we are, and what is in our hearts, and at the same time discloses the presence of God, before whom all this is made manifest, there is nothing left for the soul but to shrink back from the light, and throw up all profession of having to do with God. It is felt, and must be felt, when searched by this light, if there be no other link of connexion, association with God is impossible. For "what

fellowship hath light with darkness ?” But to meet this conviction the mind is called to think of the greatness of its resources and the sure ground of its confidence, in the greatness of the high priest of our profession. He on whose sacrifice this confidence is based is the Son of God, who by Himself has purged our sins, and in all the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice, and the virtue of His blood-shedding, has passed into the heavens ; and on the ground of what He is in Himself, and what His sacrifice has accomplished, He maintains our position in the presence of God. Allow that the word will not pass by the least shade of sin in my soul without condemnation ; allow that it makes me *feel* that “in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing,” and that I am in the light where nothing can be hid,—is that a reason for seeking to evade the light, or for the despair which would lead me to throw up my profession ? If, indeed, I were left under the naked dissection of the word, when it had done its work in my

conscience, I might, and must, be thus hopeless; but when my eye is turned to what Jesus is, and what He has accomplished, and what His position in heaven for me before God is, then I feel the force of the exhortation, "let us hold fast our profession." For well can He sustain the ground of that profession, since it is based alone upon what He has accomplished: "He suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Self-aborrent as may be my feelings, when viewing what the light of the word has discovered—for I must say with Job, "now mine eye seeth *thee*, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"—still, when it is turned from what the light has discovered in me to what that same light shows to be in Christ, in the presence of God for me, my heart is reassured, and I learn practically on what ground it is I can alone hold fast my profession.

But if the greatness and the position of our High Priest forbid the letting go

our profession, because He is able to sustain the ground of it, there is also the other side, namely, His personal acquaintance with our condition, and the sympathy of His heart, which are presented in order to give boldness under every discouragement. We are encouraged to come to Him, not to soothe us merely by His kindness, or to comfort us by the power of His sympathy, but as to the head and source of all grace, to draw from Him those supplies which will enable the soul practically to walk in the light, as God is in the light. His sympathy and knowledge of our condition—"for we have not a high priest which cannot be touched by the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"—are presented to view, not as in themselves to be rested in, but as the certain ground of His ability and willingness to exercise toward us all that active grace which He knows our condition and circumstances require. There is not a single evil that the word detects in my

heart for which I cannot find in Christ the very needed grace that shall enable me to overcome it; and it is on this ground the exhortation is presented, "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"—the pity which His heart alone can adequately feel, and the help which His love is ever ready to bestow.

"To come to the throne of grace" is a phrase that is often used, as if it applied only to the act of ordinary prayer. It is true that when prayer leads me to call upon the Lord, I do find that He is seated upon the throne of grace; but the thought here expressed is far different from that which is suggested by the use of the ordinary phrase. It is not merely that God is gracious, and will hear our prayers, and therefore we may wait upon Him with confidence; but it is the presentation of Christ as the head and fountain of sovereign grace and goodness to communicate, combined with all that perfect sympathy which

results from the place He took in redemption, and which reigns eternally in His heart, in order to draw our hearts constantly and with confidence to Himself, that we may find the blessed springs of mercy ever flowing, to cheer and strengthen us amidst the difficulties, and temptations, and sorrows, of our course.

The boldness with which we are exhorted to come springs from the character of Him through whom we draw nigh to God; and the very office He sustains has its fitting exercise in the communication of the gracious help we need. The sympathy that knows exactly how to meet my necessities, and that encourages my heart, because of the relationship which, through grace, He who feels this sympathy sustains towards me, is the very provision which God has made for what His word and holy presence make manifest in our hearts: the whole effect of being thus searched by the light resulting in a practical acquaintance with the infinite grace of Him who for us sustains the

office of a merciful and faithful high priest.

I do not come to Christ to exercise His sympathy toward me, to make my conscience easy in the continuance of that which the light of the word condemns, but to derive from Him the very grace and strength to overcome all that by which my conscience has been oppressed, as searched by that word which 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."

H' ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ,—THE ASSEMBLY.

The assembly is the same in the elements of its constitution as the whole Church, but with the blessing that it is acted on by all that God may send in any part of the whole body, by gift, or by correction needing to be

brought home to it. What is necessary to it is truth and love in the Spirit, and a pressing forward, which will be the greatest reproof of those that lag behind, and thus act as the truest discipline for the remnant in the evil day. The danger will be felt when it is found that we cannot wait for those who are ready to fall away. The end of the counsels of God in calling the saints is the glory of Christ, and in having a body fit to be the company that shall be about Him in the specialty of His Sonship FOR EVER—His bride. Every one, then, who, though with the best intentions, works on any other basis than this in the saints will, first or last, be working to his own glory, (I do not include those who work for their own interest, seeking their own things, as must be to their shame,) and is sure to bring confusion, though he teach the holiest truth, or follow the truest form of working. “The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience, and out of faith unfeigned.” The assembly is

the school of the individual (having received the fitness of grace) for the fulfilment of that character in the power of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and is carried out in making him a perfect member in the relationship of that love which is "first pure, then peaceable, and full of good fruits." The Church, in its extent, is the expression of the purpose of God's grace, looking to the time of the heading up of all things; but it is only where that which is necessary to it is found that the thought of God will find a true answer.

In one respect it is not otherwise in this evil day than at the first. A conscience exercised by present evil seeks God, and finding Him in Christ has found a resolution of every difficulty, a teacher and support in face of the enemy, and a guiding light in the darkness. Christianity, corrupt and defiled, adopted by and as yet used by the world, makes no difference whether Christ and His infinite grace has become the object of the soul or no;

but if souls, begotten again by the word of truth, having the enjoyment of His grace, and earnestly seeking their way in practical confession of Christ, and that He is again to come, find companions on the way, they are in need of, as well as are capable of, enjoying, in earnest prosecution of their path, *all* that God intended for the consolidation and advancement of their faith and love; and God provides it in His unfailing grace. It is in this very different from the remnant in the day of Antichrist, who, though not the Church, having suffered, reign with Christ. These are real and faithful through all proof, in ignorance, but in a measure of holding out against the enemy, made wonderful by their ignorance; the word, perhaps, hardly known, but they kept of God in tribulation, such as never had been, or should be. Not so *now* with the remnant who keep the truth; beset (at present at least) with subtlety and falsehood, but with the word in constant use, amidst spiritual corruption and dissipation of

truth, the tendency of which is to destroy the peculiarity of the calling of the saint, and the true defence of his position. An evil day, therefore, ever brings with it a more individual cast of confession and capacity, in dependence on God, of confessing Christ under very various proof, and therefore is it said, "keep yourself in the love of God," and otherwise to the man of God, "from such turn away." But this never makes *any part* of the canon of truth necessary to the Church or saint less necessary; while all that is given of God is necessary, and dependence on it, "that the man of God be thoroughly furnished," and fit to help others; nor is the assembly in its power and offices, according to the mind of God, less called for; it is to supply whatever it ever supplied. It seems to stand last, but that is because there must be so much to minister to its right action; but there is one great characteristic which constitutes it at once as such, and that is the faith of the Holy Ghost, sent as a Person

at pentecost to be in the body. "*With them,*" says the scripture, in Christ, in whom He fully dwelt, while Christ was with them; but now *in them* according to promise, and fulfilling the same in every given power to faith and waiting upon God.

The manifestation of the presence of God in action was ever by the Holy Ghost, from creation downwards; but in all God's dealings with mankind lying under sin, the Holy Ghost was never with man personally dwelling in him, as on the Holy Ghost being sent down at pentecost, till Christ, having worked out the full remedy was, because victorious, for man, and as man, at the right hand of God. There never was obedience or life but by the Holy Ghost. There was ever *life* through Christ believed on; and farther, union with Him by resurrection from the dead individually, as with the head, but not the presence of the Person of the Holy Ghost. He in His presence constituted the Church, and no assembly or association of believers,

however general, ever did constitute the Church, nor could do so to the end of time, nor for eternity. A deference to this truth can alone constitute the assembly, or establish its action as such. "Be it to thee according to thy faith." The Church is the habitation of God, by the Spirit, and not the habitation of God without Him. The assembly of *all* believers would not constitute the Church on earth or in heaven; but as the Holy Ghost is in the body on earth, and is sent, and is ever the same, is it the Church. One body and one Spirit; and farther, the operation of membership to the service of the body, or of individuals of it, rests on the part of the Church and the assembly being the habitation of God, and on regard to it. BY THE HOLY GHOST IS. THE SUBJECTION OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST IN GLORY.

The Holy Ghost keeps the Church in possession of the truth of the glory of Christ, and of who He is. According to the measure of the subjection to Christ is the revelation of the truths

contained in the word vouchsafed by the Holy Ghost, and understanding of it given. Admission to understanding thus measured was given by Christ while He was on earth, and *now* according to subjection to Christ, by the Holy Ghost.

If the world was convinced of the righteousness of God, by the coming of the Holy Ghost, because Christ was *with the Father*, the Church, having the Holy Ghost, and believing in the mission of the Holy Ghost revealing Christ, will be always convinced of the same. Giving God the glory of all things, brings Him forth in His all-sufficiency to man returned to Him in Christ.

The cleansing from all sin by the blood of Christ depends on the faith that in God is "no darkness at all." These things wrote the apostle that we might not sin; but if any man sin, &c. Because there is individual communion in any measure, there is blessing in any truth and grace of God, is there not rather the overflowing on all around in the bond of the Holy

Ghost? Not but there is individual personal communion beyond what is in company with the body.

If there is indeed a true love for Christ it will be manifested in attachment to all the grace that is in Christ. It is in forwarding of this in souls that all the relationship of the members is engaged subject to the Head. To one ardent of his way, no revelation of his fault is an offence. If Paul, during his presence with the Philippians, (God working in the saints to will and to do,) was suggesting all that was to perfect them, the fear and trembling in which they would seek to please God and abound more and more, in his absence, were but the fruit of this desire. But should there be misapprehension of one's state in this intercourse of mutual help, if it were private discipline, *it may call for the patience of a saint*, and nothing can happen but what the supply of the Spirit of Christ can turn to account. The heathen could say that it was the part of true friendship diligently to advise and be advised, and if the Church fails, "bearing the prize

in mind," to take advantage of its grace to do the same, surely what hope is there of it? There may be not only misapprehension of state, but of the truth of God—here there would be something to suffer and something to be done; but nothing need be done without advantage. "Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." Many forget that grace—grace in truth—is glory begun. Now this course of edification must presuppose both individual desire and love of the Spirit in the body, and the individual seeking "to apprehend that for which they were apprehended in Christ Jesus," and desiring to know "the power of the resurrection," walking in the light, "being made conformable to His death." Nothing binds souls more together in love in the Spirit than the honest purpose of seeking truth, and according to it "to purify themselves, even as He is pure." *It confirms in the faith*, it admits to the true sense in the full assurance of understanding of the mystery of God. (See Col.)

I see in love in the Spirit the whole

of the work of the enemy overthrown. It is the peculiar characteristic of the saint redeemed out of the age of enmity to God, and the conspiracy of selfishness, which is but the concealed enmity of the seed of the wicked one. It is the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of His own, and is full of the peace of God. The form of this love on earth is that of brethren in the flesh, attached beyond the forms of the world, pure and kindly affectioned, considerate, inclined to hide shame, compassionate, but in all things according to the hope of the presence of Christ.

The day is evil and the Church confused, but the word is *light* in the darkness, there is no need to stray. We have but to return to our God; we find Him where *He* was, and always is; it was we who had strayed.

In the day of the blessed Eliakim and the worldly Shebna, they pulled down the houses within to fortify the wall, "and looked not to the maker thereof." Such indeed has been the

course of Christianity. In some sort the way of God has been in the growing day of evil and of worldliness just the reverse. God has provided against such a tendency in supplying peculiarly, in such a day, in the development of the word, all the materials to a saint for his individual soul. Salvation is his wall and bulwark. God knoweth them that are His ; but in nearness of communion, and its power, and a simple rest on the faithfulness of God—God transports the soul into Himself, and hides it there. But even so, is there no common bond from God for the blessing of the saints in the bundle of life together? Is it not the bond of the Person of the Holy Ghost sent of God, and to abide for ever? A mere massive association of Christians is totally unfit, from weakness, to exhort one another at the approach of the evil day ; or else they fall quickly into the forms of the world, or sink into corruption. The Holy Ghost sent down at pentecost is also the earnest of the inheritance, and keeps the saint out of

the world, and supplies the spiritual need of exhortation in the body. It is not that less grace is needed, though in a different relationship of things, where believers enjoy but little from God, than when there was danger of carnal clashing from the abounding of spiritual gift. The end is the same, the working out of the state is different. The character of love, in its full negative working against the remnants of nature in spiritual men is more needful now than in the days when the Church had yet her garment of glory and beauty, so soon lost. "Love suffereth long, is kind; love behaveth not itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Love endureth all things." Men must be on their way to bear this, and if they are so, and have Christ and His grace, in what is it untrue that God shall supply all their need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus, members of His body, and heirs of the kingdom? Let

them build the inner houses of the city and their own first. The husbandman must be first partaker of the fruits. Gifts—real gifts—are indeed a blessing of God, but whoso boasteth himself (by knowledge and various talents, perhaps, or various presumptions) of a false gift, is like clouds and winds without rain.

To preach the gospel of grace of the kingdom and of the glory is still given, and the night is not far distant. Encouragement in the hope of the gospel—building—refreshing, is dispensed of Him that abideth for ever. He anoints the saint, who subjects himself to Christ—with intelligence of the word that He has conveyed. He is the tender comforter of the confessor wearied in conflict, and the strength of his confession.

The apostle is gone, and there may be confusion in the joints and bands, but while the communion of the saint cannot be hindered, (nay special provision made for its depth in the revelations of God's love,) the Holy Ghost

sent by Christ from the Father makes the Church the habitation of God for ever, and the union of it on earth, by faith of the ordinance of God in Himself—AND SO OF THE ASSEMBLY—and is power from on high for every saint for the maintenance one of the other BY FAITH. *The assembly is God's or the world's.*

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON.

Read 1 John i, and ii, 1, 2.

If our hearts were as simple as the word of God, our perception of its truths would be as simple and as easy. But it is not so. In a certain sense it could not be so; nor ought it to be so, till our hearts and thoughts are brought into subjection to God's thoughts. There will be no simplicity till the conscience is purged; because, till the soul is brought to God, all is confusion and darkness on account of sin. In partial and dimmer light there is often terror, because everything is confused. So when the conscience is at work, until we are brought to set to our seal that God

is true, and learn that *all our* thoughts perish, all our ways are foolishness, terror and confusion reign in the soul. But when brought to this, our hearts become as simple as the word. It is a great matter to have the heart exercised. God would have, and will have, the mind and conscience exercised. But till our thoughts are brought into subjection to God's thoughts—our own thoughts utterly set aside—we cannot have blessed and happy thoughts of God. When our thoughts flow in the current of God's thoughts—when His thoughts become ours—it is blessed in every sense. The conscience is blessed, the heart is blessed; and you go on cheerfully. Not so when God speaks, and we begin to reason; setting up our thoughts *against, or mingling* them with, God's revelation. That is not simplicity. Till the soul is bowed to receive God's thoughts you cannot, and ought not, to have perfect peace. I have sin in me! how then *can* I have peace? Here is the difficulty. "For, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If the revelation of God in Christ shines into me, I cannot say, "I have no sin." What follows? "If any man sin, we have an *advocate with the Father.*" Here, then, I find

how I can have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Christ, the advocate with the Father, maintains us in the communion we are apt to lose. This is the great secret which breaks down human pride—*entire subjection* to God's thoughts. If God has given a revelation, and I am not subject to it, it is unbelief—it is rebellion. God says, "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin." If I say, "I have done this or that, and God cannot forget; He knows all, and He must remember;" I am found reasoning, and not submitting to God's thoughts. I am concluding what God must be, from what I find in myself, consequent on the light which has shined in.

How then can I have peace? God does not mean us to take up things lightly, without exercise of soul. When the light of God shines into the conscience sin is felt, and seen too, where it never was seen before. God shines in, and I find darkness. God cannot have to do with darkness. I find that in me which God cannot accept. How can God accept me?

I am always glad to see a conscience exercised thus. It is all useful to convict of sin. It is good for the light to probe to the bottom of the heart. It is awful to

think what the human heart is. I do not mean in the gross forms of evil. There is something in the selfishness, the cold calculating reasoning of man's heart, worse than all the sins one could enumerate. Yes, even of the decent man who keeps his character! Is there one single motive which governs your heart, decent and sober as you are, which governed Christ's? Is there one feeling in your breast which was in Christ? *Not one.* What governs men? *Selfishness.* Not so Christ. There was no selfishness in Christ. In Him all was love. Love it was that brought Him down. Love gave Him energy when hungry and weary at the well. Love carried Him on, one constant unfailling stream of love. Never was He betrayed into anything contrary to it. Deserted, abandoned, betrayed, still there was one unwearying acting of love. Selfishness can feel love. It is even lovely to man's mind, though he is the very opposite of it. Yet some are amiable and beautiful characters. But how do they use their amiability? To attract to *self*—self governs man. Selfishness need not be put into Him; it is there. All is sin from beginning to end—all self. Whatever be the form it takes it is vanity. Is it not

true of every one that will read this, that some personal gratification, perhaps some little bit of dress, has more power to occupy the thoughts, than the agony of Christ? Not that He would have us always occupied with that; He would have us occupied with His person and glory.

What I want to prove, then, is that we cannot think badly enough of what our hearts *are*. It is well that we should know it, for we cannot have the truth without in some measure judging the root and principle of evil within.

But then have we any power to remedy the evil? No, none. But when brought to God, happily we get miserable about it. When there are desires after truth I hope, because I see some goodness in God; but hope is dashed by seeing some evil in myself. *That* is not simplicity. It is judging God by some sort of knowledge of what I am. It may be true and righteous; but it is *law*. The principle of law is, that God is towards man according to what man is towards God. It is the principle which conscience always will act on; for according to conscience it is right. The evil is not in this, but in the fact that I am not brought to total despair. The light has not as yet broken down the will, so as to make me

cry out, "I am vile, and abhor myself in dust and ashes." Beloved friends, if I take the ground of expecting anything from God, in virtue of what I am towards Him, *all is over!* there is nothing but condemnation. God is holy, and I am not. God is righteous, and I am a sinner. The end of all these exercises of soul is to make you cry out, "I am vile," and that is all. God is holy, and I am not. He is holy, and must be holy, and ought to be holy. Would you have Him lower Himself down to what you are? No, never. I may tremble before Him when I think of it, but I would not have it otherwise. No person quickened into the divine nature could deliberately wish God to come down from His holiness, to spare one sin, because he has learnt by that same nature to hate sin. My heart has tasted a little of love in God Himself; for He cannot reveal Himself without revealing love. The law shows man what he ought to be, but does not show what God is. It says, love God, and shows me that I ought to love, but does not tell me who or what the God is I am to love! Job said, if I could but find Him! However distracted and broken to pieces under the hand of God, he felt that if he could only find Him, he would love

Him. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" Flesh is always under the law. Realizing by faith the precious truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, then all is easy, all is peace. Flesh comes in and troubles, and the soul is down; and it is up and down; and the evil is that the soul gets habituated to such alternations, and not to walking in communion with God.

To think that God is going to condemn me is not fellowship with His thoughts. What is fellowship? Common thoughts together; common feelings, affections, objects; one heart, one mind. Thus we have fellowship with God! How wonderful! Fellowship with the Father and the Son. How so? Why; what have I received, if I have not received God's thoughts? Does not the Father delight in the Son? and do not I delight in that there is all beauty and perfectness in Him? Do not I delight in a soul being converted? Is it not your delight that Christ should be perfectly honoured and glorified? and is it not God's too? If God's thoughts are the spring of our thoughts, can we wonder that our joy should be full? The Holy Ghost gives thoughts, and our hearts are too narrow to take them in in all their fulness and

power ; but our joy is full, nay so full that it runs over. It is not that we are not inconsistent to the end. The peace and rest that we get is, that there is no modification, no change, in God Himself. If we say there is this or that inconsistency in *me*, and how can such as I look to God, and begin questioning, we get back to law—to judging by my own good-for-nothing heart of what God is. Would I have you indifferent to sins? No! but I would you had so settled and constant a judgment of the flesh, as vile and *cannot* please God, as to give yourself entirely up. Many of us have to learn this by detail—by failing, and failing, and failing. It is better to learn it by a ray of light shot from God's credited word—to believe, from His report, that from the first shoot it puts forth from the earth, to the last fruit it bears, it is the old tree, and will never bring forth anything but wild grapes. A hard lesson this, but a true one. Are your hearts brought to say, in God's presence, I know that "I am carnal, sold under sin?" Have you come to this point, to accept the entire judgment of God against yourself? Terrible! But you must get these to know more full blessedness. Have you ever sat down satisfied to know that that *self*, that

is sitting there, cannot please God? When it comes to that I give up all thoughts of judging God by what I am; for then He could only cast me out of His presence! I am not looking to gain eternal life. I cannot; I have failed. Where then shall I find that which I so desperately want? Why in this was manifested the love of God. (verse 2.) Himself is manifested. The life you want is come by another. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." You are just the opposite to Jesus. How did you find that out? Jesus is manifested, the eternal life which came *down* from the Father, to you, because you could never have got your heart up to it. If Christ is not my life, where is it? Is Christ my life? Yes! and what a life I have. It makes me see sin in me—true. But if I have the sin, have I an imperfect life? A life which, perhaps, God cannot be pleased with? No! it is given from God, because I am mere sin. God sent His Son that I might live through Him. It is God's *free* gift. Where is responsibility then? As regards *getting*, there is none. It is in the *using*! Do I weaken responsibility? Nay, I give it all its force. If you are under the law, you are either weakening its authority, (for if I say God

is merciful and will give a reprieve, I destroy the law,) or you establish the law, *proving its utter condemnation*, and that you are *dead* through it,—a lost sinner—alive by the life of Christ. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (verse 5.) God comes in as light. Sin is darkness. “Light has no fellowship with darkness.” Light being come in, we must so stand in the presence of God, that in the full light of His holiness, no spot at all is seen in us. Do you walk thus in the light? It is a real thing. The walk *is* what a man really *is*. Can you stand in the light, as God is in it without a veil between, walking, not according to the light, but *in* the light? Have you ever walked in such sort, *knowing*, without an effort in your conscience, that you are in the presence of God. If not, how have you been walking—going on for a few brief years? Whither you know not—in the awful folly of the human heart—in a constant state of moral madness! Have you ever had it all told *out* in your conscience, alone with God, all that you ever did? A long tale! That is what you have done, that is what you have thought, and *I saw it all!* Would you

like thus to be told out, alone with God, the things that perhaps were not done before men, just proving that you thought more of man than of God? Is it all going to sink into *oblivion*? Have you thus been *manifested to God*, as the apostle speaks? Here is a message—mark who brings it! A message by Christ. To bring me to Christ—to God—to judge? No! But to bring me to one who has *come* to put away all that He has made manifest! I breathe again! What comfort! I can desire now that everything should be known; everything I have even thought of, because it is to Him who came to put it all away. Not to hide, nor excuse, but to put it all away. The Son of God has died for it all. It is God putting *my sin* away, instead of putting *me* away. I am in the light, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin. I get the witness of God Himself, God who is light. If He does not show a spot in me, who will? Do I say, there is no spot in my nature? No. But it does not depend on what *I* am; it depends on God, in whose light I am. The God who manifests me tells me that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin! God has loved me *perfectly*. How do I know that? Because of what I am? No; I know it

from what *God is*, and from what He has done ; and my soul rests in constant, perfect, undisturbed peace ; for God has revealed Himself to be what He is, and has revealed what He has done, in that Christ died ; and what He has done never can change—He never changes. It is in the power of an *accomplished salvation* that the soul rests, and not on anything that is yet to be done ; so that there can be no change. The blood of Christ alone blots out my sin. If Christ did not do it perfectly, when will it be done ? But He has done it. “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” When faith, by divine teaching, has laid hold on this, faith does not change either. “The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins.”

One word at the close on that which is important to us all—*communion, fellowship*. Is communion never interrupted ? Yes ! But *God's love* is not interrupted, nor my confidence, though my communion may often be ; for God cannot have communion with a single sin—with an idle trifling thought—so that when such come into the mind we cannot have communion. What is the resource then ? The answer is given in chapter ii, verse I, “My little children, these things write I unto you that

ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It is not here *mediator* with God, but advocate with the Father. Communion with the Father has been interrupted. Advocacy is founded on two points. He, the righteous one *being* in God's presence, and that He has made propitiation for us. We have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and we lose it through sin or folly. Christ comes in as the advocate, and the Spirit of Christ works according to advocacy, and restores communion, brings us back to fellowship with the Father and the Son. Here is the remedy for daily failure. Our position is fellowship with the Father and the Son.

That our joy may be *full*. Have you been brought to this? He has made peace. Have you got it? Take no rest till you have it. Tolerate no sin; but see that God has put it all away by the blood of the cross. God forbid there should be any levity about sin. Nothing is so impossible as that God can brook sin. But He can put it away. Have you, by faith, attained this rest, rest in that eternal life which came by the shed blood, never to be shed again? Beloved friends, only be sure of this, that God is love; that in all His ways

with you, He is love, and He would have you happy. You cannot be happy in evil. Because He is love He would bring us to know this love, and *find therein our rest*. Aye, and He would have us reckon on Him as regards our failures. I have sin in me, and I have no strength save in Him. If I cannot, or do not, go to *Him* when there is sin and failure, where am I to go for strength? Moses said, Exod. xxxiv, 9, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." Could you go up with the stiffneckedness you have without God? "Go with us," says Moses, "*because* it is a stiffnecked people." You will never get the victory over sin, nor indeed properly judge it, unless you have God with you! Christ can give us to hate the sin and strengthen us against the thing we hate. God is love. I know it in Christ, and I have Him against the evil that would hinder me--the thing I feared would be too much for me. "We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

THE HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

BELoved BROTHER,

I have been occupied, for my own soul, with the enquiry what is the hope of the Christian, and I send you some points of the result, thinking they may be a means of cheering and encouraging some of God's dear children. The first important point which this result brings powerfully home to the heart and conscience is, that the source of this hope, and the only means of rightly estimating it, the only sure ground on which the heart can rest in appropriating it, is that all that I hope for is the fruit of the grace of Jesus, that in which His own heart finds its delight, in giving to us, because it is that of which He knows in Himself the blessedness, and because His love is perfect towards us, His interest in us as perfect as Himself. This is essentially characteristic of perfect love. All this, I need not say, is according to the counsels of the

Father. "It is not mine to give," says Christ, "but to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." For it is what He takes as man, that He gives to us, and hence, as receiving it Himself as man from His Father, and delighting in it as the expression of the Father's love. This thought brings out another simple, but remembering who Jesus is, a most blessed and wonderful truth, that where there is perfect love on the one hand, and capacity of enjoyment through possession of the same nature on the other, love will seek to introduce its object into the common enjoyment of that which it possesses, and finds its blessing and happiness in. This is true of a friend, a parent, and every genuine human attachment; though of course in these cases, imperfection is attached to the affection itself, and to its power of accomplishing its wish to make happy. But the perfection of Christ's love does not, since it is love to us, make our introduction into the enjoyment of His blessedness a thing not to be

hoped for because it is too excellent; but just lays the sure ground for this hope. It is His own delight to make us happy, a part of the perfection of His nature, His own satisfaction. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." It is to this I would first of all direct the attention of yourself and your reader. Christ is finding His own delight and joy in blessing us, and in blessing us with Himself, because He loves us; and this blessing must be according to the perfectness of His own nature, for it flows from Him, and is to be enjoyed with Himself, and as He enjoys it before and with the Father. What a scene this opens before us, if we have indeed tasted His love, and yet it is all dependent on His own free goodness, and the fruit and display of it: the happiness itself being dependent on His own excellency. That His grace is the source of it every Christian will recognize; but I think you will find, that in taking scripture to guide us in the details it gives of our future

blessedness, this character of blessing shines out most evidently. And it is the elements of our future joy which scripture affords, which I would present to you, though surely grace is needed to give them their value, which will be just proportionate to our personal estimate of Christ Himself; that is, to our spiritual knowledge of Him. Our possession of the life of Christ, His being our life, so that it can be said of it, in its nature and fruits, "which thing is true in him and in you," is the basis of our hope, and that which makes us, in connexion with His work on the cross, capable of enjoying it. He became a man, and having first wrought redemption, and glorified God in our behalf, and put away sin for us, and made peace, becomes, as victorious over death, and entering risen and glorified into God's presence, the source of life to us, nay, more, *our* life. We are thus brought into the place of sons. All the old thing, with its fruits and nature, judged, condemned, and done away, whatever conflicts and exercises of heart

we may have with it, and through it, while down here. As alive in Christ we stand before God, consequent on the accomplishment of redemption, and in virtue of complete forgiveness. "He has quickened us together with him, having forgiven us all trespasses." We are introduced in the place of sons with Christ, as the result and fruit of redemption, and as really partaking of the life in which He lives. See here the Spirit, in 1 John, (which specially treats of the existence, possession, and development of this life in Christ, and so in us. See i, 1, 2, and v, 11, 12, for the general principle,) connects us with Christ in life, position, and, consequently, hope. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons (children) of God,"—have, by adoption, Christ's relationship with God, yet as really born of God, possessing a nature displayed in the same qualities,—“therefore the

world knoweth us not, because it knew him not," (the true and perfect Son of God.) "Beloved now are we the sons (children) of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him (Christ) purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Blessed testimony in all its parts: born of God, we have the nature (morally) and position of that true, blessed, and eternal Son made man, that in His glory we may be with Him, and like Him. *We* are children of God, unknown by the world, consequently, as He was. We shall be perfectly like Him in glory, seeing Him as He now is above in heavenly glory, and hence can bear no lower standard now. Having this hope in Christ, reaching to, and founded on Himself, we seek to be as like Him now as possible, in the inner man, and in our ways we purify ourselves as He is pure. What a picture of the moral position of the Christian is here,

through His living connexion with Christ! It is sweet to say it is ours, sweeter to say we have it in Him, and that He Himself is the perfection of it. If His life is animating us, through the strengthening grace and communications of the Holy Spirit, what a power and value will such a statement have for us, living by, and dwelling in Him. Here then is one great and blessed part of our hope, "we shall be like him, we shall see him as he is." It is perfectness, in likeness to Christ, in ourselves morally, in its full result, for it is in glory; that is, all the full fruit of the power of this life as in Christ, produced even as to the body, while its internal excellence, likeness to Christ, is perfect, and no hindrance to its exercise, but, quite the contrary, a suited condition: and with the blessed *consciousness* that we are like Him, though we have it all from Him. We shall be like Him: but secondly, in this state we shall have the full blessed *object* in which this perfect nature delights, and in this

state is capable of delighting in all its absolute and heavenly excellency before us. Its satisfying object, an object which can keep all its powers in blessed and full-exercise, can occupy it with perfect delight. And yet while I delight in Him as supremely excellent, the full display of heavenly excellence, I know that I am like Him. I could not, my desires being fixed on this, having tasted its excellence, be perfectly happy, were I not. Yet in us this excellence is a capacity to be occupied with its perfection in Him. However great our glory and excellency may be, it is only as being *like* Him. He is the thing we are like. He is it in its own proper and positive substantive being and existence. If I am adopted to be a son, am really born of God, a child, He *is* the Son. Hence all our excellence is the means of apprehending and adoring His. We may remark that this is true, both in moral perfections and in relationship. God is perfect in Himself and for Himself. Love and holiness, as indeed every

other attribute of God, have their joy in themselves, and of course perfectly and infinitely in God. But the creature needs an object to enjoy perfectly what this blessed nature is and gives, even when he possesses it. The new man delights in holiness, but the perfect holiness of God is needed for the perfect delight of our new and holy nature. The new man has a nature imbued with charity, and so can delight in its exercise; but the perfect love of God, manifested in Jesus, and known in communion, is His delight. So in our relationship we are sons with God; but I must learn in Jesus what it is to be a son, and what the power of that word is: "the Father loveth the Son." We share in the glory; but the glory in which we share is His. In the hope, then, presented to us in this passage, we have the Father's love presented as the source, so that we are already children of God, so as to know our position; but this flowing from our being born of God, from Christ being our life, and we as He, so

that even the world does not know us, as it did not know Him; we are so identified with Him, that though what we shall be does not yet appear, we know we shall be like Him when He shall do so; seeing Him in the very glory in which He now is as Son, with the Father, viewed in manhood on high. It is not as this world will see Him, being blessed under Him, and seeing Him so far as He can be revealed to mortal eyes, but being like Himself, and seeing Him as He is.

This leads to another part of the blessing, which is equally the joy of Jesus Himself. We shall be with Him. Evidently, if we love and delight in Him, this is needed for our full joy; and while He ministers this in us now, by being present with us in grace, it is the object of our hope in its full character and permanent fulness. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Remark here, that the apostle, when speaking here of the Lord's coming, does not enter at all, as regards our portion, into the consequences in glory

and dominion. That has its place; but what satisfies and fills the apostle's heart, when he has the revelation of the way in which God would call up the saints to their enjoyment, is, for his own feeling of joy and delight, all embraced in this, "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

This is, more than once, brought before us by Christ Himself. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The connexion of these last words, with what precedes, throws light on the value and extent of this hope. The Lord continues, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

The Father had to decide, so to speak, between Christ and His disciples on one side, and the world on the other, for the moral separation was complete. What the Father was had been fully shown in Christ. The

world could recognize nothing of it : There was no common principle or bond. The disciples had recognized, at least, through grace, that He came from the Father. He could not stay in the world. That was closed. His *departure* forms the ground-work of the whole chapter. Whether He or the world could be owned of the Father could leave no doubt. The Father, and necessarily so, had loved Him before ever the world existed ; and if the world rejected Him, the hour was come for the Father to glorify Him with Himself. For the time, no doubt, the disciples were to remain in the world ; but He had declared unto them the Father's name, and would declare it, that the love wherewith the Father loved Him might be in them, and He in them. Hence He would have them where He was. They would be able to enjoy it, since they knew the same love, and He was in them to be the power of the enjoyment. It was not only their desire and blessing, but His. He would have them where

He was, if He could not (and it was far better, surely) remain where they must be for the moment. Mark here, that this connects it with the knowledge of the Father's love, as it rests on Jesus. He desired to have them with Himself. It was a part of His delight. He would show them His glory, who had walked with Him in His humiliation. But besides this, there was the capacity of enjoying what He enjoyed along with Him; for the Father's name He had revealed as He knew it, and that the love wherewith He was loved might be in them. What a hope is this, and, blessed be God, founded on a present blessing, only as yet in an earthen vessel, and known in present imperfection. And if we are with Christ, it is in the Father's house, where He is in the Father's love. He is not alone, He is gone to prepare a place for us; nor will He be content to send and fetch us, He will come and receive us to Himself, that where He is, we may be also. This same xivth chapter

shows that it is our present knowledge of the Father, as revealed in the Son, that is the means of knowing what this joy is, and coming to the enjoyment of it. We shall be there with the Lord, ever with Him. No interruption, no decay of joy, but rather ever increasing delight, as there always is when the object is worthy of the heart, and here it is infinite. And this in the relation of the Father's affection for the Son. We are with Him in that place, with Himself, and *with* Him in the joy, infinite joy, which He has in the Father's love, a love resting on Him as Son, but in His excellency as such, loved before the world was, and now the accomplisher of redemption. Some other passages will help to fill up the great leading traits here given, both as to the glory and our living with the Lord, showing our identification or association with Him, and the character of this blessedness. "The glory thou hast given me, I have given them," the Lord says, "that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and

they in me." If Christ is in us now the hope of glory, He will be in us then the display of glory. He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. It is not here mutuality, but manifestation, manifestation through the fulness and excellency of that which is displayed, being in Him that displays it: the Father in Christ, and Christ in us. "Thou in me," says the Lord. The Father is in Him, in divine unity and fulness, and yet here mark, Christ is spoken of as one to whom glory is *given*, that is, though a divine person, He is considered also as man. And then, "I in them" so that as the Father is displayed in the Son, as *in* Him, so the Son, Christ, in us, as *in* us. I will now refer to two Psalms, which collaterally throw light on this part of our subject, the xvth and xviith.

In the xvth, which is (with others) quoted in scripture as showing the humanity of Jesus, His taking our sorrows and position of dependence on and obedience to God, that is, our posi-

tion as saints, it is said, "I have said to Jehovah, thou art my Lord, my goodness extends not up to thee; to the saints on the earth, in them is all my delight." That is, having the divine glory, He associates Himself with the saints on the earth, these excellent in God's sight. At the close He shows, that as one who is the head of these, the path of life is shown to Him. In God's presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore. This then, in principle, is a part of our hope, as His "companions," though He be anointed with the oil of joy above us. We are in God's presence where fulness of joy is. Where God's presence shows itself it fills all things and excludes all contrary to itself. It necessarily makes infinitely and perfectly happy. It sufficed to Christ's hope—His who knew it best and perfectly—surely, then to ours: and, as we have seen, we have a nature capable, without alloy or mixture, of perfectly enjoying that presence. Let me add too that

we shall not lose the Holy Ghost by being in glory, loss indeed it would be. Our nature of joy will be the new nature, the divine nature of which we are made partakers; our power of joy the Holy Ghost who dwells in us. It is striking that even Jesus, after His resurrection, gave commandments to His apostles by the Holy Ghost. (Comp. Rom. viii, 11.) The xvith Psalm gives the fruit of dependence, the xviith, as God will be found as a righteous answer to Christ's claim, in virtue of His walk and obedience, to the beholding the Lord's face, and awaking after His likeness: of this we have spoken on 1 John iii. The beholding the face of God, we find again in Rev. xxii, only it is there, in a more general way, the glory. God and the Lamb are thrown, so to speak, together. It is not the Father and being with the Son. God and the Lamb that was slain are brought objectively into one point of view. The portion there shown to us is seeing His face, His servants serving Him, His name on

our foreheads; that is, privilege in approaching, service as it should be, and the perfect and evident witness in us of whose we are. This is a more external part of the joy, but it is most precious, and not to be omitted.

Luke ix will afford us light also, both on the glory, and living with Christ. It is, we know, a picture, a momentary manifestation of the glory of the kingdom. Moses and Elias are in the same glory with Christ. They are with Him in all the intimacy of familiar conversation; talking with Him. They are talking of what, necessarily, most interests Christ Himself, and man too—of His death, and that in connexion with the great change about to take place in God's ways—His death at Jerusalem. They do so with a divine knowledge, for it was not yet come. The excellent glory too is there. They enter into it. Remark here, that Christ speaks of the same things with the same familiarity to His disciples on the earth. Another testimony gives what is more personal. For all we have spoken of is common.

to all saints. We shall have a white stone; that is the perfectly approving testimony of the Lord; and on it a name written, which no man knew but he who received it. That is, a joy and communion and personal knowledge of the Lord, which was for him alone who had it, between his soul and Christ. I have thus spoken of what is personally or individually enjoyed: there is, besides all this, the presenting of the Church to Christ; the glory of the kingdom, looking downwards, that is, towards that over which we shall reign. But these are not at the moment my object. But how bright and blessed is the hope that is before us, founded on the acceptance of Christ Himself; to see Him—be like Him—with Him in His own relationship with the *Father*—to converse with Him with divine intelligence—be before God with Him—enjoy unmingled unclouded blessedness of His presence—with and as Him—yet to receive it all from Him—to owe it all to Him. Another point in the transfiguration is worthy of all

attention. They, that is Moses and Elias, enter into the cloud. Now this cloud was the dwelling-place of the divine glory—"the excellent glory," as Peter calls it. Hence, the three apostles feared, when Moses and Elias entered into it. But not so do we read of Moses and Elias. This, then, is another part of our hope. If a voice comes out of the cloud for those on earth, it is the home of those who have their place in the heavenly glory. I may add, in connexion with this part of my subject, that I do not doubt that the cxlvth Psalm gives us something analagous, on earth, to the intercourse between the Lord and Moses and Elias. If you look at verses 5, 6, 7, what is, I doubt not, the intercourse between Messiah and the godly, in the excellent glory of Jehovah. But this by the bye. I would have the reader remark, how all this joy has its counterpart and commencement of realization down here, save the glory of the body alone. How the heart knows that, how sweet

soever the common joy of saints, a necessary proof and accompaniment of the holy liberty of the Spirit, in a pure heart, yet that in joys and sorrows, there is a looking to Jesus, a communion with Jesus, a dependence of heart on His approbation, in which none can participate. On high it will be perfectly enjoyed and possessed, in the white stone and the new name. The heart that knows Him, could not do without this. Let us remark, too, how various the joy is—and so it is now—I delight in the nature of God—I delight in a Father's love—I delight in the glory of Jesus—I delight in my intimacy with Him—I delight in the blessedness of being with the Son before the Father—I delight in His being a man, with whom I am, yet one divinely perfect—I delight in God and the Lamb—the blessed and glorious display of redeeming counsels and divine glory—I delight in being like Christ—I delight in all the saints being like Him—I delight in His being glorified in them—I delight in

adequate service, in a full and perfect witness, in a fit and heavenly worship—I delight in what is proper to God—I delight in what is the glory of Christ Himself—as such, it is what is common to all, and what is peculiar to oneself. The Christian will remark, too, that in enjoying Christ in glory, he will not lose the blessed feeding on an humbled Saviour; we know this also now, we delight in communion, and in hope in the glorified Lord; but we turn back and feed on Jesus, lowly and rejected, on the earth. If He is what we hope for in glory, He is what we need on earth; but our heavenly state will surely not diminish our power of delighting in the perfection of that blessed One. And as a pot of the manna, which had nourished Israel in the desert, was to be kept in the ark in Canaan, that Israel, in its rest, might know what had sustained them in the desert, so we shall eat of that hidden manna, which has nourished and fed our souls in our pilgrimage. But I close. May hope be as living in the saints, as the

object of it is worthy of all their hearts. May they abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Let me recommend, as throwing light on this, the first chapter of Ephesians, where our position before God, our relationship with the Father, and the difference of our calling and our heritage, are very clearly brought out.

APHORISMS.

God will not adapt Himself to *unbelief*; He adapts Himself to the *heart*.

Jews had to do with the *seventh* day of the week; Christians with the *first*—a mingling of time and eternity.

The flesh is always an inhabiter of the earth; for what else can it inhabit?

God was perfect love to me when I was perfect enmity to Him.

A man is never justified by experience; he is justified by faith.

The Spirit of God is never our right-

eousness; He is power in me; but Christ is my righteousness.

If the word of God has reached my soul, it shows not merely what is in the word, but what is in my soul.

Grace is love working where there is evil.

If any one had to be shut out of heaven because of my sins, it must be Christ, because He took them.

The experience of faith is never toward self—no faith is in my own feelings—I have faith in God.

Prophecy is never about heaven, but about earth.

Events about earth are never the fulness of Christ in heaven.

God never lowers His standard;—
“Do thy first works?”

Grace brought Christ where *sin* brought us.

Man is heartless about grace; bold about glory!

Paul never lets his *mind* loose in a sea of motives.

The moment religion accredits a man it is nothing: that which does not

put the heart to the test costs him nothing.

Fresh truth will never lead a man to give up old truth.

Common topics of truth bring no rejection from the world ; but fresh truth tries.

For the sinner, the conflict is between God and the *conscience* ; with the believer, it is *between* God and the *heart*.

The place the saint has in the Father's house is *with* Christ and *as* Christ.

Because we are sons, God seals us.

We shall never find thwarted affections in loving Christ.

The darkness of the world is religiousness : "this is your hour and the power of darkness." It was religiousness that crucified Christ. "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

To doubt if God is for us, is unbelief.

We are *fallen so low*, that by some means or other man will lift himself up.

If you choose to take your place with the Lord, you must be content to be cast out by the world.

In heaven every one will have his place, and all be looking to God.

Selfishness itself can admire the unselfishness it profits by at the moment.

Would to God Christians were as honest when they have got peace, as they are while seeking it!

Man has turned God out of the world by crucifying Christ.

The law is not grace. Grace may say it is holy, just, and good.

When judgment comes grace is over for ever. "Grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ." The law is neither grace nor truth. Truth is the real condition and relationship with God in everything, and with every one.

Who told the real state of man and of this world but Christ and the cross?

"The kingdom of *heaven*" is said because the King is in heaven. "The kingdom of *God*" could be said when Christ was on earth.

The law showed what man ought to

be before God. The law deals with evil. In the law we find what man ought to be. The law is extracted out of the Old Testament. The law cannot mend what is broken under it.

Love finds its link wherever there is a misery—wherever there is a want.

Righteousness will reign when Christ reigns; “*grace reigns through righteousness.*”

If I take law and judgment, there is only perdition for me; but if I take grace I am brought to God.

What I *cannot* escape, Christ *would not* escape.

We get death by disobedience, *Christ* by obedience.

God shows His love, not in giving us our old nature restored, but in giving us of His *own nature*.

Practice in scripture is always put after grace.

Paul brings out the counsels of God. John brings out the nature of God—eternal life manifested in Christ, and communicated to us.

In Paul we get the development of

knowledge, in John the development of the affections.

The new nature is a dependent nature ; it never could act of itself. The old man pretends to be independent.

Man gets the good thing, enjoys it, and leaves God out.

Mind cannot measure love. Mind can measure mind. Love is known by being loved.

No knowledge can love ; we must be born of God to love ; for " God is love."

Truth is authority.

If ministry be real, it brings the conscience to God ; if false, it leads from God ; it stands between God and the sinner.

The word of God never treats men's minds as competent to judge of it. The power that works men's minds is totally incapable of judging of God's word.

What I have faith in I am subject to. Christians are never put on their own minds to judge error.

Israel undertook, in terror too, what

Christ undertook to do in love. All was living obedience and living love in Christ: the touching living expression of love in spite of sin.

Saul is a destroyer amongst the Jews; *Paul* a workman amongst the Gentiles.

When we lose the sense of God's presence, conscience sleeps, and will awakes.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

Matt. xiii, 45, 46.

From high the Lord beheld, ere worlds began,
As though it was the residence of man,
This teeming earth, by sin and hate defiled
Estranged from God, perverted, lawless, wild.

But underneath the mass of sin and vice
He saw a pearl of untold, matchless price,
On it He set His yearning heart, and then
Gave all He had and bought the peerless gem.

Of it possess'd, His gracious purpose is
To make it shine in everlasting bliss;
To polish it is now His constant care,
His image on its beauteous face to bear.

A. M.

EARTH'S JUBILEE.

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,
as the waters cover the sea.—Isa. xi, 9.

That blessed time will surely come, when all
shall know the Lord,
I find the promise largely writ in God's most
precious word,
When "holiness unto the Lord" shall greet
each gladdened eye,
And oft my soul impatient prays, "Lord haste
this time of joy."

Sweet are the visions of that time, portrayed
by God's own hand,
When righteousness and peace shall reign
supreme o'er every land,
When all shall know the blessed God, shall
know and love Him too,
And earth present the scene again, which
angels loved to view.

No longer Satan's wide domain, creation
ruined, marr'd,
But all earth's kingdoms shall become "the
kingdoms of the Lord,"
No proud usurper then shall rule, no power
acknowledged be,
But Christ, and He alone, shall reign, while
earth keeps jubilee.

How cheering is this prospect fair to all who
now bewail
And mourn the wide-spread evils that so
mightily prevail,

Who grieve to hear that name blasphem'd, the
 only name they prize,
 To see poor sinners hate the cross, and mercy's
 gifts despise.

Yes, it will come, then O my soul, take courage,
 all is well!
 The glories of the Son of God creation yet
 shall tell;
 The groanings of the earth shall cease, all sin
 be done away,
 Come, Lord, disperse the midnight clouds,
 and usher in the day.

A. M.

THE JOYS OF CHRIST.

We ought to think of the joys of Christ, as well as of His sorrows. Nothing shows where a man's heart is, and what it is, more than, when oppressed, distressed, and full of sorrow, where his heart finds its joy, and if it does find a joy unreach'd by it. We see these joys in Christ, a secret comfort in the midst of His sorrow. He had "meat to eat," which man knew not of. Besides, His communion with

His Father there was this working of love to us. Paradise shone in upon His heart, in comforting the poor thief. "Go in peace" refreshed His spirit in the house of the Pharisee. "She hath done it for my burial" justified Mary against the reproach of selfish man. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes," was His joy in the sense of the heartless rejection to which the wickedness of man subjected Him. How blessed to the heart, besides learning where His joy was, to think that He found it in the working of His love to us!

I am not satisfied with the acknowledgment commonly made of Christ. It is not whether I am rich or poor, though the latter is the safer, truer, and better state. Sacrifice of convenience and worldly means is no way answering a character to God's glory, if the principle of the world's greatness is avowedly kept, though perhaps sacrificed to the dissemination of gospel truth.

“THE MERCIES OF GOD” THE
MOTIVE TO A “LIVING SA-
CRIFICE.”

Romans xii.

This chapter is a great division in this epistle. It begins with the expression of the full result due from the saint, because of all that has preceded it, in the grace of God, set forth in the epistle. “I beseech you *therefore*, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” What follows would also show us that however God acts first on individual souls, by His divine method towards them, yet He never sees them out of the connexion of the body of Christ, and the building of it up together in the faith, by the varied spiritual helps and gifts of the members.

How we come, through the course of the epistle, to the point to which we are brought in chapter xii is full of interest and instruction. The epistle, it may be said, is, in its general aspect, the theory of grace and salvation, brought in by the mercies of God, on the depth of the ruin and the need of all, and of every man, as guilty before God; and on the way of final condemnation. The course of the epistle has been already marked out by another, so that some repetition will be necessary to bring us to our chapter, and place it in all its force. The guilt of all is the matter of the earlier chapters; and that it is by grace and righteousness alone, through faith, that salvation is given, is the next period in it.

The summing up of the *fulness* of the dealing of God in grace we find in the last verse of the fifth chapter: "That as sin had reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The *security* of grace to the believer we find in the

last verse of the eighth chapter: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." How blessed is the sense to our souls of the marvellous dealing of our God! Fulness and security of all grace in Christ, according to the purpose of God's own will, in the raising up of the soul out of its ruin and condemnation, to life eternal, and complete in resurrection; carrying with it all that the yearnings of the Spirit of God could teach the soul to desire!

The last verse of the fifth chapter, quoted above, declaring the fulness of grace, is taken up in its proper result in the *first* verse of the eighth chapter: "Now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," because the law of the Spirit of life made them free from the law of sin and death. This is the perfect deliverance

wrought in such a grace. Chapters vi and vii are left to their proper functions, guarding the doctrine given.*

From the *last* verse of the eighth chapter we pass as distinctly to the first verse of the twelfth: "We beseech you therefore," &c. All these places, taken consecutively,† form an unbroken cord of divine goodness in the order of the fulness of grace; the first verse of the twelfth chapter being, as was said, the expression of the full result, morally and divinely, due from all that preceded. Such are the mercies! The believer is addressed now in life and capacity; and, as looking always to the fountain of the grace,‡ is

* The sixth and seventh chapters, being each a separate parenthesis, not hindering, but securing, the argument.

† ix, x, xi, being national chapters, and manifesting, as well, the consistency of the actings of God.

‡ There is an expression in the word, "Through the faith of him," which has not resolved itself to some minds. It is the faith of the person of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily.

besought to offer his body "a *living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God."

It is the power of God, introduced through faith, that works the end of the desirous soul, and gives God the glory. How all the imaginations that would charge the way of God in grace, and His purpose to the saint, with failure, because it is of grace, in forming the soul in restoration to His image and separation to Himself, come to nought before such an exhortation! So made ours, and thus continue the blessings of grace, unto all fulness. "These things," saith the apostle, (1 John xiii,) "have I said unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and *that ye may believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" We find the fruit of all the blessed dealing of God ever in the path of faith, from the enjoining believers to reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to the painful process of dying indeed, as a

living sacrifice, and by dying, to live by God our life, and to God; for if we be dead with Christ, we believe also that we shall live with Him.

It is a great fault not to see how God is with us, and not to be using all the power of God by faith, (that it may be by grace,) till every thought is in obedience to Christ, and He lives, not *we*; having our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

It is difficult for human nature to learn—and it never does learn but by the teaching of God—concerning itself and Himself, that faith is now the only way of God, and that there is no other way that God may be known as all in all. This is evidently founded on the truth that we are under the last dispensations of God's dealings unto life. It includes the fact of the failure of man being total, and the reinstatement of man in new creation, as anything, to be purely in grace, and *standing in the power of God*. God, in His divine wisdom, saw that this must come in all clearness to men's hearts, and therefore

the successive revelations still pointed thither, till this, the last of all, shone out without question. Whatever appointments were made, the *living* God was all in all; and the mystery, that faith in the method of God unto life and salvation, is the established point at which we are. If Paul sends an epistle (1 Tim.) full of the ordinances of order in the Spirit, the "mystery of godliness" is still "God manifest in the flesh," preached, believed on, received up into glory.

Our consciences are set free from the dead works which were of old, whether brought out of the grave of Christ, or manufactured anew by men's vanity. It is the living God we have to do with, and therefore a living sacrifice we have to offer. "I arm myself with the same *mind* that was in Christ Jesus," "who was put to death in flesh, and made alive in the Spirit."

We who are alive from the dead are awake out of the grave with Jesus; we survey, in spirit, as risen men, the sinful tendencies of the old nature; (while

we are still waiting with desire to be clothed upon from heaven;) and in the communion that grace by Jesus Christ brought me into, I judge it and find it judged; I confess and find cleansing. How precious is the manifold testimony and power of the blood of Christ! It is the testimony of death accomplished. The life is before me, shed forth, and the blood, now mine, is the cleansing of Him that is alive for evermore; the Spirit serving to apply, through faith, all the grace in which I stand. From whence the Spirit came, thither must the Spirit tend and lead. Nor let any suppose that the action of the Spirit is sensibly separate from the conscience of the new creature. Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith. What is born of the Spirit is spirit. With the new creation, therefore, which is of God by faith, the Spirit of God finds a home, and sympathy, and intelligence; for it is of God. Now faith accepts nothing but what is of God; and whatever word of truth in Christ the soul accepts,

as of God, bears its fruit. We are begotten again by it. He that has confessed and believed is forgiven. He that believeth on Him that raised up Jesus is quickened by the same Spirit; even as Abraham, given in type, was quickened naturally, being as dead.

If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, because (*see margin*) of the Spirit that dwelleth in you. All this is of grace by faith. All is of God and not of ourselves, yet of which we are made partakers. Infinite grace! We see how effectually it is ours when we read that the sufficiency which is *ours* by faith is of God, though we are happy in counting nothing as of ourselves, but rejoice in the hope of the glory of God by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

“Be ye not, therefore, conformed to this world,” is still, as the rest of the epistle, the dealing of God with the individual; and “the world” is used in the sense of the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eye, and the pride—the showy, glaring things—which the world delight in; and are all, not of the Father, but of the world. The world means also something more than this, as lying in its *general condition* in the power of the wicked one; but the above appears to apply to the individual condition of the saint, because the exhortation continues, “but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds.” In fact the image of Christ taking more and more room in our soul, the glory of this shall be revealed, not only as being clothed, (not being found naked,) but *revealed* “in us.” Being a *living* sacrifice is the foundation to this; and blessed it is to be objects of such an exhortation.

Under such an order of blessing every exercise is to be fruitful of something, and to work such a subjection of our wills as gives to the Spirit the rule of our actions. But the constant sense of being His (and His we are) is necessary to our doing what we have to do to Him and not to man; while it causes the

sense of service and of Himself to abide with us. It makes the saint act so as that the Lord will own the works, which shall meet and welcome him when received into the everlasting habitations of the heavenly kingdom, to the glory of God.

But though this epistle is engaged with the dealing of the God of all grace with the individual, yet so large a portion of his character and service is to be formed as a member of the body of Christ (how vain to think to exercise these things in the world) that the apostle could not leave out the saints' place in it. Indeed it seems as if all had been preparation for this; and, if duly waited on, would save the Lord's interference in immediate reproof and discipline. It returns, in the 9th verse, to the personal grace; but it is a divine way on earth, and nothing short of it. The practical form of the injunction in the 10th verse is much to be noted. The "kindly affection" there mentioned is given in a word applied peculiarly in the Greek tongue to natural and domestic affec-

tion. The brotherly love is of heavenly birth. The relationship is from above, and they are children of the Father; but the family is still here, and the affections are in safeguard. Let each sentence be studied and seen as that which is the saint's way. I question the just translation of "condescend to men of low estate." We have to look to other portions of the word for the full expression of the relationship of the body.

To him that overcometh the departure of Christianity, of his day and time, are the promises made. Affection to Christ and to all that is of Christ, and from Christ, and is Christ's, will be a mark of faithfulness, carrying its sure blessing, (for have we not all gone astray?) and will return full of desire to Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. And lastly, "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," which is the fulfilment of the saints' place to the world.

“I WILL COME AGAIN.”

John xiv.

Nothing is more prominently brought forward in the New Testament than the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the first comfort of the angels to the sorrowing disciples: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts i, ii.) And if you turn to the first of Thessalonians you will find it presented in the end of every chapter as a common doctrine.

It was not at all a strange thing—immediately after conversion to the living God—“to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.” Again, in Hebrews ix we read that “He appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . . and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” In the second of Thessalonians it is presented in the way of warning, as well as the object of

the blessed hope of the saints: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."

From this we see the amazing difference between the coming of Christ for this world, and for those who trust in Him. To the world He comes as a judge of both quick and dead; (see Malachi;) but in this 14th of John we find a wonderful difference in the whole principle and spirit of a believer's expectation of Christ.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." (Rev. i.) "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Mal. iii.)

Dear reader, let me ask you, Can you stand before Him at that day? Do you think that you would have confidence before Him at His

coming? Could you say, “Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him?” This is He whom I have loved and longed for? Men always judge according to what is suited to themselves. In 1 Thess. iv it is said, “So shall we be ever with the Lord.” Now, are you suited to be ever with the Lord? Have you this confidence? If it is founded on anything good in yourself it is a vain ground of confidence. Peter, as soon as he found himself in the presence of the Lord, felt that he was not suited for the Lord. I am too corrupt, he said. This was a true judgment of Peter; and love for the dignity of the Lord and for holiness. If you are content that holiness should be lowered that you may get off, you do not care for holiness, though you do for getting off. The moment I have seen the holiness of the Lord, and that happiness is in holiness, there is the immediate feeling of my unfitness for that holiness; though there may be the longing for it, which the Lord will doubtless in mercy answer.

Two things are needed thus to meet the Lord. First, the conscience must be right. I may have the kindest father, yet if my conscience is not right, I cannot be glad to meet him. And, secondly, affections must be there—the Lord must be my portion. If my heart is on literature, or on any thing else here, I shall not like to be where Jesus is. I shall rather be *here* for a time. If you like the world you are fit for the world. Heaven is just the contrary, and you know it; and therefore you do not want to go there, because it would take you from being here in the world. There is the comfort of the gospel. It did bring down to men's consciences all that could attract to God. But alas! men no more desired the Lord's company here, than they do there. The coming and rejection of Christ here is the plain proof that the world is not fit for Him, and He not fit for them.

But now to turn to our chapter. We find persons here the opposite of all that is in the world. "Let not your

heart be troubled.” About what? His leaving them. Their happiness, comfort, and joy was in having Christ with them. But now, He says, I am going, but I am not going to be happy without you. There is plenty of room for you. The thing with which He at once comforts their hearts is this, “I’ll come again.” I cannot stay down here in this vile place, I’m going to prepare a place for you, but I’ll come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also. The Lord reckons on this satisfying their hearts; and their consciences did not hinder. “The Father’s house!” Oh! they could go there. “I will receive you unto myself.” He knew the chord that rung in their hearts: to be with Himself, the source of all blessing. Thus we get the character of these disciples: they were persons whom the absence of Jesus distressed, and whom the presence of Jesus would comfort, not here, but with Himself.

There we find what begot this character. It was all founded on His own

word. We do not care for what does not concern us. But as soon as we see a thing that concerns us, it becomes important; and then we want certainty. Now it is very blessed to have God's own word for the basis of our certainty.

For instance, I am a sinner—how then can I get into the Father's house? Because God has said, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Well, God is true, and He will not remember them. Do you say I am presumptuous to say so? I do not say so, *God* says so. And again in John v, 24, "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, *and shall not come into condemnation.*" And John iii, 33, "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that *God is true.*" Thus when the power of the Spirit brings home the word, I have certainty. Faith is in the word, but it is about something. Christ is presented, and man is brought to the test. People always judge by their inclination, and not by their reasoning. Now the effect

of the testimony of the Spirit of God when Christ is revealed, is that men are not fit for Him, and their hearts do not like to be with Him.

These disciples had loved the Lord. Christ had attraction for their hearts. There, at once, we see the object of their hearts' affections. Christ had fixed their hearts. Take Mary Magdalene, for instance. She was all wrong in her intelligence, yet Christ had attraction for her heart. So with the rest of the disciples. They all ran away for fear; but it was love to Christ that brought them into the place of fear. Thus we see that Christ Himself was the object of their hearts. They were the companions of Christ—all fear being gone—according to His love and grace. “Ye are they” He said, “who have continued with me in my temptations.” Why? *He* had continued *with them*; but He speaks as if indebted to them for this fellowship. And being in companionship with Christ in heart, He brings them into all the joy into which He is going—

nothing less than the Father's house. What attracts is found in Christ, and then it gets from Him the certain assurance that He is coming—and coming for *me*. Now when the heart is on Christ, what a thing it is to know that He is coming. Am I afraid? No, I am looking for Him. And it is to His Father's house He is to bring me. All that makes heaven a home to Christ, will make it a home to me. O come, Lord Jesus. If I have learnt to love Christ, I have learnt to love holiness, to love God. God, in Christ, has brought down to my soul all that God is. What shall I get in heaven? Another Christ? Another God? No. It is the one we have seen and known. Whither I go ye know. I am going to the Father, and you have seen the Father in me.

Ah! But He has not given up His holiness, perhaps you reply? No, indeed, He has not. But Jesus knew all that is needed for me to be with Him. And if He will make the heart to love, He will put the conscience

perfectly at rest, that I may love Him. Will He do that by dulling it? No. He will do something that will enable me to stand in the presence of God, in whose presence I am to find my joy. He reveals fully God in His holiness, and takes away the sin that would hinder my being in the presence of that holiness. And not only does He put sin away, but He purges the conscience *here*, so that I am enabled to enjoy God, in full, free, affection. Nothing is more attractive than the death of Christ; but besides that, it puts away the sin of which I was guilty: an act in which I had no part, an act the proof of perfect love, while it meets perfect righteousness. I had done the sins, and I could not undo them. Jesus said to Peter, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” That touched Peter’s heart. If you are not cleansed according to my cleansing, according to what suits God’s presence, you have no part with me. O what a comfort! Instead of saying, depart from me, Jesus said, “Now you

are clean." And in Peter we see the proof of a good conscience. He said to the Jews, ye denied the Holy One and the Just, the very thing he himself had done, fifty days before. Now a man will talk of every sin but that he is guilty of; he will shirk that. But here Peter was in perfect peace about the very sin he was guilty of. His conscience was perfectly purged.

The happiness of the heart that is touched, is to be with Christ; and conscience is purged for being in His presence. Between the Lord's saying this, and coming for them, He had put away sin from God's sight, and from their conscience. "I will come again, and take you unto myself, &c, and whither I go ye know." There is no uncertainty. We know where we are going to. The soul has found fully the object that has set it at rest, and that will satisfy it up there without fear.

Could the Lord thus address you? Could you say, O that is what I am wanting? Or, are you saying I've got here what I would like to enjoy? Is

that being a Christian? A Christian may vary in strength of affection, never in object. I am sure I do not love the Lord enough, but I am sure it is the Lord I love. I have no confidence in my own heart, but all confidence in Him. He has died for me; that is what I count on: He has put away my sins; that is what I need: He is coming again; that is what I am longing for.

Dear reader, let me ask you, was it ever a trouble to you that you had not Christ? Do you know where you are going? It may be you have hope; but have you certainty? Now we, Christians, have; for Christ is known, and when He is known there is perfect rest in His word. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

APHORISMS, &c.

Jesus had the taste of heaven in everything He did, and the world cannot bear this!

We suffer here because we have a soul risen in a body that is not risen, and that is in a world at enmity with God.

Christianity alone could give great force to individuality and to conscience, and at the same time unite men under the direction of Christ, towards one centre, which is Christ. This could only be possible by the Holy Spirit, who takes away selfishness, while it gives power to the conscience; giving by faith an object to the heart outside of itself—an object which acts on the individual conscience, and unites us all, through one predominant affection, to one centre of affection, by one life, and one only power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit acts as the Spirit of union of the children of God; but conscience cannot be in society, and reject its own individual responsibility. It is *individual*, otherwise God could not be the master of conscience.

The Holy Spirit directs conscience toward Jesus.

If we will avoid the principles of

evil, it must be through conscience; there is no other way.

The Christian who acts from conscience will avoid a thousand snares, of which he is not at all aware.

So far as the Christian enters into the ways of the world, it is a complete prostitution.

Whatever makes the world happy in spite of God, is in the spirit and course of Babylon, and for a Christian to be there is to be in Babylon.

Babylon is the spirit of worldliness, cast out far away from God, as guilty of the death of Christ, and which nevertheless gives itself up to embellish the world. All those Babylonish principles, all that your eyes may lust after for your drawing rooms and for your pleasures, all those things separate you from heaven. It is Babylon on a small scale.

What is often important to man is not so to God; for God has Christ in view.

Man glories in a truth that costs him nothing, inasmuch as it is gene-

rally received, and takes advantage of it to oppose the admission of more light which would demand faith.

Heaven is familiar with evil as judged, as with that which is good, to enjoy it.

All that happens to us is foreknown and prearranged of God, in order that His child may stand in the midst of difficulties. All I have to do is to say God is perfectly acquainted with the position I am in, and He knows the way He has prepared to extricate me from difficulties, if I remain faithful.

When Jesus was on the earth heaven looked on the earth; now that Jesus is in heaven, the Church on earth looks on high. In a yet fuller revelation, as at the conversion of Paul, it is owned as one with Jesus, who is there.

Prophecy is a revelation of future things, to act on my conscience now.

There are always warnings that we have neglected previous to chastisements.

A soul that is unconverted has no idea of a God, tender, gentle, who "wipes away tears."

It is precious to have always God's true object in view, which cannot stop short of His glory.

If one would get at the bottom of the counsels of God, one must look at His glory.

The sight of the glory sanctifies truly, and gives an object far above all that could be prepared to stop us here on earth.

We shall never walk well here below, even in the smallest details, if the great end is not constantly before our eyes.

If I have any object on this side the glory, even the welfare of the Church in detail, my soul will suffer from it.

We want faith to lose our fortune and to forgive; but if it is coming out of the society of man, it is entering into that of God.

The selfishness of the world understands the grace that is in the Christian which can forgive; but in principle that grace is foolishness to him.

If you are wishing for money, or seeking to make provision for placing

your children in the world, or if you have any plans for the future, you cannot wish for the Lord Jesus to come ; and if you cannot, then your hearts are not right with Jesus.

It requires more real grace and faith to *pray* for the Church of God than to labour and to preach ; though neither can be done rightly without.

It is comparatively easy to love and feel humble when conscious of making people your debtors by service ; but when there is neither energy for service, nor power to communicate, this tries what is in the heart.

FOUR WISE THINGS ON THE EARTH.

Proverbs xxx, 24—29.

“There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise : the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer ; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses

in the rocks ; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands ; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."

In these verses we get many of the principles of faith. We see it first in the ant, who, though she is not strong, prepares her food in the summer. Faith always looks to the future, and gives up present enjoyment for future blessing. The ant may be considered a mean, laborious creature, while it is preparing its food, and others are enjoying themselves in the summer-time ; but it reaps the reward of its toil in the winter, when its storehouse is full, and others are wanting food. Thus the saint is despised and rejected now, but he will soon enjoy happiness when those who are happy now will be miserable. In "the conies" we see a picture of the Christian, feeble and unable to defend himself, but strong in the *Lord*, *his rock*. Away from Christ, he is nothing, but in Him he is strong and invincible amidst all the attacks of the enemy. Christ is our rock, our for-

tress, our God, our strength, our buckler, and the horn of our salvation. (Ps. xviii, 2.) "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands." This gives us a beautiful picture of the love and harmony that *ought* to exist between Christians, though they have no visible head, yet should they show the influence of their head in the order and unity manifested in their assemblies. Though the locusts have no king, yet there is not the slightest disorder in their bands; all is closely compacted together, all is harmony and order. In systems of men's devising, there is always some head set up, and the worldling will mock those who have no head, because he would say, "there can be no order or regularity where there is no head." But though the worldling know it not, Christians have a head, and the viceroy of that head (the Holy Ghost) presides in their assemblies.

"The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces." Here again we see another picture of the

Christian, disagreeable and contemptible in *himself*, yet he has access into the *holiest*. Mark the ambition of the spider; it is not in the lowest corner only that the spider is to be seen, but even on the golden cornice and the marble stone.

Thus let it be with the saint, endeavouring individually to be like the ant, providing for the future; (Matt. vi, 19, 20, 21;) like the coney, trusting not in himself, but in the Lord, his rock; collectively, like the locusts in love and harmony; and like the spider, having boldness to enter into the *holiest*.

“AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH.”

John x, 28.

“Never perish,” words of *mercy*,
Coming from the lips of one,
Who, though here a homeless stranger,
Fills the high eternal throne.
Brightness of the Father’s glory,
God and man in one combined;
Faithful Shepherd of the chosen,
Safe are those to Him assigned.

“Never perish,” words of *sweetness*,
Dissipating every fear,
Filling all with joy and gladness,
Who the Shepherd’s voice can hear ;
Bringing richest consolation
To the soul fatigued, oppressed ;
Sweet refreshment to the fainting,
And to weary spirits rest.

“Never perish,” words of *power*,
Satan now I can defy ;
Safe my soul beyond my keeping,
Hid with Christ in God on high.
Come what will, I’m safe for ever
’Tis the promise of my God,
Written in His word unfailing,
Sealed with Jesu’s precious blood.

“Never perish,” words of *glory*,
Heaven is mine, and all is well ;
O, my soul ! with rapture burning,
On this precious sentence dwell.
Think not of thy faults and failings,
Nor on thy deservings brood ;
What thou art in Jesus ponder,
And this promise of thy God.

THE OBEDIENT ONE.

Read Luke iv, 1—32.

In the sixteenth Psalm we find the Lord taking His place with the remnant, the excellent of the earth, in whom is all His delight. And we see, in chapter iii of this Gospel, that after His baptism, He was anointed as minister of the circumcision—the Holy Ghost descending on Him—and then His genealogy is traced up to the human family; “the son of Adam, which was the Son of God.” His genealogy is not here traced up to David, that being in Jewish connexion. Jehovah having anointed Him to preach the gospel to the poor, and the Lord having taken the form of a servant, (I speak not now of His power in Godhead,) he must fulfil the place of one: and so we find Him calling God His master: saying, in Psalm xvi, “O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, (Jehovah,) thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee;” or, in other

words, "Jehovah, my Master," &c. As a servant, therefore, we never find He did His own will; for if a servant is doing his own will, he is a bad servant. A servant is to do exactly his master's will, and not his own.

Then again we find Him as the dependent man, praying and waiting on Jehovah for deliverance; and never using His own power to deliver Himself: as in Psalm xl, "I waited patiently for Jehovah, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." So likewise, when the multitude came "with swords and staves," to take Him, He said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" It was not merely that He did not have the twelve legions of angels, but having taken the place of lowly dependence on Jehovah, He would not even ask for them. And as the trials thickened, even to the drinking of the bitter cup, He said, "The cup which my Father giveth me shall I not drink it?" If when everything that might have stop-

ped a man in this path of obedience, lay in His way, He went steadily on doing His Father's will, His obedience to the last must also be put to the test. He had presented a *perfect God* to man, for He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and He must, to the end, present an *obedient man to God*. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." It was not in His *will* that He had to learn subjection—that was ever perfect—but He had to learn all that obedience cost, and all that it meant, even unto death. Moreover, if we walk in this same path, beloved friends, we also shall find trial, though we shall find blessing also. For we shall find it refreshing to our souls to tell of His love and grace to others, just as He found it blessing when He said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest, and he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice

together." Thus His joy is fulfilled in yourselves.

In all His trials He had no friends to stand by Him ; but He was surrounded only by those who were like unto bulls ; as He said, " strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round." Still it was His meat to do His Father's will—" He must *needs* go through Samaria," although He knew it was the path of rejection.

Thus, as " a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," He went steadily on in the path of obedience. Not like the first Adam, who went out of the path of obedience ; but, although tested in every step He took, He travelled on through every difficulty, till at last He bore God's wrath for man's disobedience.

In this fourth chapter of Luke the Lord's path of obedience begins ; and it begins at a time when Satan had the mastery over man uncontrolled. For man had become the slave of Satan, as well as the slave of his own lusts, and so Satan had power over the bodies and over the souls of men. Satan had power

over man in *two* ways, first, by allure-ment, and second by terror. By allure-ment in the way of man's lusts: by terror, as having the power of death. As the tempter he acts on our lusts; as we see an instance in Judas. The spirit of covetousness was in him, and then Satan presented that which met it; and this he is doing with man every day. Then again he has power over man by terror, for "he that hath the power of death is the devil," and through terror he led Judas to hang himself. Therefore if the Lord came down to deliver man, His obedience had to be put to the test, in these two points in which Satan had power over man. In the wilderness Satan presented himself to the Lord as a tempter trying to *allure* him out of the path; but in Gethsemane he exerted all his power of terror, to *frighten* the Lord out of the path of obedience. Jesus was led of the *Spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, but *we* are led by our *lusts*; and therefore it is that Satan has power over *us*.

Mark here, that not only was Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness, but after being there forty days tempted of the devil, He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. Then again the Lord goes to be tempted by the devil in far different circumstances than Adam was in, in paradise. Everything there spoke of the goodness of God; but in this wilderness, the Lord was tried on every hand; and there was no spiritual help, not even a *John*, but He was surrounded by wild beasts, and was hungry with nothing to satisfy His hunger. But amidst all, with everything against Him, He stood firm in this obedience to God His Father.

Then observe that He met all the temptations of Satan just in the very same way that we have to meet them every day, that is, by the written word of God. He did not say to Satan, 'I am God, and you are Satan, and therefore go away immediately;' that would have been no help for us if He had. Neither is it the archangel warring against Satan; but the Lord meeting

him as a *man*, with the written word of God, and all His quotations are from the book of Deuteronomy. If the Lord came to deliver man, He must put Himself into the place of temptation and trial, and as *man* overcome where man had failed, and where he was lying under the power of Satan. It was not possible that Jesus could fail. If He could have done, it would have been worse than ever for us. But we see Satan tries to introduce into the heart of Jesus what he had too successfully introduced into the heart of Adam, but He could not, blessed be God! Satan said, "all this power will I give thee, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it." Jesus, who had walked in the constant joy of God, was to be exercised by temptation forty days in the *wilderness*, and to know what it was to have Satan working at Him for forty days.

It is a great comfort for us to know that Christ thus measured the whole power of Satan; for Satan put out his whole power against Him then, save the

power of death, the time for which was not then come. But here was the strong man armed, keeping his goods in peace; but there was a stronger than he to overcome him, and take from him his armour wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils. While it was in so lowly a house as the human body, that Jesus overcame the strong man, it proved *who Jesus was*. Any other man had nothing to do but to go along with Satan, for Satan goes with him; but here Jesus had to get into the circumstances and to take this body, to visit Satan; and that proved that the person who was there was stronger than the strong man. You never find that any other man needs to be abstracted from men to be tried by the devil; for men are *at home* with *Satan*, while they are strangers to God. If man would be in communion with God, he must, like Moses, go up into the mountain; but Jesus did not need to be away from the conditions of human nature, to be in communion with His Father. He always was this. In grace He served

men, but His true place was always with His Father. He took a *place* lower than Moses, but His *person* was higher. He took this place in order to meet Satan, which was the strongest proof of His divine love. While other men are at home with Satan and strangers to God, this emptied, humbled one would give full proof of His love, and as a stranger with Satan is met by him in circumstances abstracted from the ordinary condition of human nature, neither eating nor drinking, but afterwards He hungered. Christ would not have His way in anything. Though tempted by Satan to command the stones to be made bread, He would not; for He came to show what man's obedience was, and virtually says in answer, I have emptied myself, and now I must wait for the word of the Lord, for man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The written word of God has authority over man, and it is also wisdom to guide man. 'Here I am the Son

of man, and under the authority of the word of God, therefore I will do nothing but by the word.' 'I live by the Father and speak by the Father, as the Father gave me commandment, even *so I do.*' "By the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." (Ps. xvii, 4.)

Here we see the amazing importance of the written word. If God ministers grace and life to us, it is through the word; and if He acts on our *wills* and *thoughts*, it is by the word. Jesus did not resist Satan by saying, 'I am God, therefore do you go away;' but He withstood him with the written word; and so now should we. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not;" for in the power of the Holy Ghost he takes up the written word, and then Satan is utterly powerless. The written word is the "sword of the Spirit," which Satan cannot grapple with.

If walking in the path of obedience, that is power, almighty power; for if walking in this path, I am going in a

divine path, and nothing can take me out of it. The child of God, having the Holy Ghost, can quote the word when tempted. One single sentence will silence Satan; and here lies the secret of strength; it is not intellect, but the Holy Ghost keeping us dependent, and enabling us to use the right word at the right time. If some object, and say, "oh, I am so ignorant of scripture, and so weak," the answer to that is, "there has no temptation taken you, but that which is common to man, but God is faithful, (who is behind it all,) "and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." Ignorance does not matter, if we are only faithful. The power and grace needed are there, to keep our feet from going astray.

It is by *deceiving* that the devil overcomes us.

That which was a snare to Adam, was an occasion of obedience to Christ. "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it." If any one says, what harm is there in eating when you

are hungry? I answer, no harm: but the harm is in doing *our own* will. The question is not, where is the harm in doing it, but *why* am I doing it? Is it to please God, or to please myself? If it is to please myself, that is doing my own will, and that is sin. If I ask myself *why* I am going to do this or that, if I cannot say it is to *please God*, then *it is sin*.

Some will say, am I always to be under such restraint? Ah, there comes out the true state of your soul; you do not like to be under the restraint of God's will. The old nature hates the restraint, while the new nature will delight in it. "It is written, man shall *not* live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We are quickened by the word of God at the first, and then we are to live by it. Not as the law, which says do this, and do not do that, but having life, we are to live by the word, the expression of God's mind and will, and thus have His will, and not our own, as the motive for all we

do. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Thus living unto God, our reasons and motives being according to His will, it will not be like fencing the old man from the power of temptation, but it will be living in the power of the new man. Man was to *live* by eating.

Power was the next thing. All had been subjected to Adam, and now all was to be given to the Son of man. "And the devil taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me: and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."

Now, Satan is openly detected, and hence the word, "get thee behind me, *Satan*." But mark the perfect wisdom of the Lord's reply: He says not a word about taking the kingdoms from Satan, or about prophecies relating to

them, but takes up the first common principle of obedience: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

It is no matter who all the kingdoms belong to; the simple word is a fitting word. It was the heart's question of its relationship with God; and if my heart is right, I shall begin to thank and to praise God before I receive the blessing; and why? Because I have got the God of the blessing. Look at Eliezer! he would not be contented until he had the word that Rebecca was of Bethuel's family, although he had had a remarkable answer to his prayer; but before she promises to accompany him, he bows down and worships the God of his master Abraham; thus rejoicing in the *giver* of the blessing itself. To worship God is ever the *highest* thing, though it may seem to be less. It is the immediate link of an obedient heart with God, and it was this that, in the power of the Holy Ghost, made the Lord look not at whom the *glory* and the *power* really

belonged, but to whom the *worship* belonged; and said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Here the Lord is put into the place of Messiah glory; but what could be more subtle than Satan's quoting scripture promises when tempting the Lord to prove His Sonship? But why should He throw Himself down, before the time came? There was no command for that; and so the Lord replies, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." For *tempting* God is trying God *before* the need comes; not *when* it comes, as many have said. Christ could not listen to Satan for one moment; but, alas! we often do listen to him, that we may get

a little bit of the *world*. Had God told Him to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple? *No*. Then He would not do it, to prove whether God loved Him or not. Israel did tempt God, by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" After the Lord had been stoned out of Jerusalem He returned *again*; but this could not be tempting God, because it was His Father's will for Him to go there again. Therefore He says, "Let us go into Judea again." How different it was when the sisters of Lazarus sent for Him. He moved not to them, but "abode two days still in the same place where he was," though the sympathies of His heart would have led Him to them at once. But He waited the word from His Father.

Beloved friends, we want the word *behind* us, saying, "this is the way, walk ye in it." It is not what may be *before* us; but it is the word coming to me *before* I do a thing, and not afterwards. If you have not the knowledge of God's will as to any matter, never

do it; for if you do not know that it is God's will you should do such a thing, you will have *uncertainty*, although it may be God's will that you should be doing it; and acting thus you will be stumbled at every step, instead of going on in happy confidence. You ought never to have to question the certainty of God's being with you. Remember also that the word is not power and strength if you are not in the place of obedience. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

Then mark another thing. In Luke we have ever the moral connexion of things before God. Two or three sabbaths are brought together to bring out certain principles, and so the temptations are not given in the order in which they occurred. It is the moral connexion in the human character, and with the human family, the Spirit, by Luke, gives; and therefore the most spiritual and subtle tempta-

tion is mentioned *last*, though in order of time it was second.

In these progressive exercises of Christ, we get the progressive exercises in our souls. Promises suppose trial, and the Lord met Satan in every point which Satan could try us by, where we are ; I say, where *we are*, for if Adam had been in paradise, there could have been no question about "the kingdom."

Christ put Himself into all the difficulties which man has made. The Lord has gone through all the temptations any saint can possibly be in. The saint wants the help of the Lord in temptation, while the sinner wants redemption. "The angels kept not their first estate," neither did Adam ; and when Christ was here, He was tempted not to keep His first estate, but blessed be God He did ; and the saints have practically in their walk to keep their first estate.

I am to reckon myself dead unto sin, and alive unto God. Are we doing this ? If not, we are not keeping our first estate.

It does not suppose a man led astray

by his lusts; but the godly man wants help to walk in the path Christ has marked out for him, being constantly exercised by temptation; Satan ever putting something before him to try his faith. Satan did this with the Lord, but He passed through it all and bound the strong man; and now He enters into all our sorrows and keeps us in the power of God, as He will the remnant in the latter day; so keeping us by the power of the Holy Ghost "that we may be able to stand in the evil day."

The Lord looks now out of Israel, and shows Himself ready to take up any poor sinner that will receive Him, as He says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Therefore we are not always at the evil day work,—there is blessing for some days. If the gospel is being set forth by us in the power of God, it is not in detail *an evil day to us*; but a joyful one if souls are converted. Still, looked at in the

general condition of man, it is an "evil day." It is of immense importance that we grieve not the Spirit, for this is the secret power of our life.

The power of the Holy Ghost was as perfectly seen in the temptations of our Lord, in the wilderness, as when the Lord was casting out the legion.

I would just turn for a moment to say, that when Satan promised to give the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, as having a title to give, it was true in one sense, and false in another. Satan can give as far as men's lusts are concerned. He led on Pontius Pilate, and he led on Judas, and he still leads on people to seek riches, power, honour, and "greetings in the market-place;" but such "have their reward;" for God sits behind it all as judge. Still it is by men's lusts that Satan works. Yet, in another sense, power belongeth unto God, and He pulleth down one and setteth up another.

The next moral fact in the chapter is, "Jesus came to Nazareth," working, labouring. He was sent to preach, to

present God by the power of the word. And mark *where* Christ came, when He had all this power—to the very lowest place—“*Nazareth*,” where shame and dishonour were attached to Himself; for that is exactly where *power* is found. He hath chosen “the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.” They say of Him, “is not this Joseph’s son?” “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” But will power be found by exalting the flesh? In truth it will not. He quotes from their own scriptures, and says, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” He is found having the Spirit of power, in this shameful place; neither was He ashamed of being called the carpenter’s son. The first link of His soul with God was quite untouched by it; for He being full of the Holy

Ghost, what was it to Him? and when His power is manifested and shed abroad, we find Him in the very lowest place in man's estimation; healing the "broken hearted," preaching the acceptable year of the Lord, "saying this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Here we find it at once. He does not reason with men about it, but says *here it is*, presenting at once what men want, and presenting it to such *as need*,—the poor, the lame, the blind, the halt. He presents Himself to man's need, whatever that need is; no matter whether He be more or less than the carpenter's son, grace has come down where grace was needed; for it is the character of grace to go down to the very lowest place. I would do that for my child, that I would do for no one else, because I love my child; and that is grace. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The prophets were not the gospel; man in his shame, sin and misery are *met* by *God now*. Such is the gospel; and behold *here it is*

before your eyes; *this day* fulfilled in your ears; God is come into man's misery and finds him just where he is, touching the leper in his leprosy, and cleansing the unclean. This is grace. If I find grace meeting me in my sins, then it must be *God* meeting me. An angel could not touch me in my leprosy; he ought not, for it would stain his purity; but *God* can, and this is grace.

Now the reasonings of man's mind begin. "Is not this Joseph's son?" No prophet is honoured in his own country. If Christ comes down to man, then man says, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

We get in the synagogue of that poor village the meeting-place of God and man. Grace had come down where grace was needed, but it awakens the slightings of men, though they wonder; for they cannot help seeing the power of God, for He was God. But they take the very occasion of His humiliation to slight Him. Man despises *grace*, and then sovereignty in goodness.

comes out. "Do also here in thy country." What grace of the Lord to speak of it as *His country*! The men of Nazareth were amazed, that there is a way in which God's grace can reach outside themselves, the place of man's pretended title as held by the Jews. But God's sovereign grace is above and beyond it all—God says you are bound to me; I am not bound to you. His grace is despised and His sovereignty hated.

The Lord comes to display His grace in Nazareth, and these despised Nazarenes hate Him for coming there; but God will act in grace in spite of them, and take up a poor widow of Sidon, and heal a leprous Syrian. "Then all they in the synagogue were filled with wrath and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."

Thus virtually saying that 'God in acting in sovereignty is slighting us.' 'He is not making us of importance enough, and therefore He shall not be

our God.' Christ goes on unmoved by it all, although He felt it, for *reproach*, saith He, "hath broken my heart." But He ever turns to God. If Eliezer, at receiving the blessing, instantly turned to God, so Christ at every fresh trial turns to God. "Father" was the first word that came out of His mouth when in the garden of Gethsemane.

So Paul was not cowed by all the trial at Philippi, although he *felt* it.

Moses fled when he slew an Egyptian, because *flesh* was in it, and that can never stand. Christ turns from the full scene of trial to the perfectness of the scene of *grace*, and He says, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you; how long shall I suffer you; bring him to me." That was God in grace. So here, when these Nazarenes would have cast Him headlong down the hill, He escaped from them and came down to Capernaum in His onward path of grace. I ought to "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep," but, how can I rejoice with one, and sorrow

with another? I cannot, I must be an hypocrite, if I have not the suppleness of divine love and grace which abides in Christ, and which can enable me to turn in a moment from rejoicing with one to weeping with another. How we get in Christ man perfect with God; and then turn and see all the blessedness of His grace to man.

What strength it is to my heart to say, there is one who has gone through every temptation for me. All Christ is, as a pattern, He is in grace, for those following that pattern, even now in this scene, where we are, down here.

Well, I have found *God*. I have heard the voice of the good Shepherd saying to my soul, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. If I say, O, but I am a wretched creature of Sidon—never mind, the Lord's grace goes even there! for the Lord having come, He will be to us all we want, even a rest to our spirits, and this we do want, and He can be this to us; for He was a perfect man with God, a perfect God with man.

GOD'S JUDGMENT ABOUT HIS PEOPLE.

Numbers xxiii, and xxiv.

Balaam's four utterances give four pictures of blessing. 1st, the people of God called out; (xxiii, 9;) 2nd, their justification and entire safety; (ver. 20, 21, 23;) 3rd, the present proper blessing of God's people; (xxiv, 5, 6;) 4th, the Lord's coming; (ver. 17—24;) the latter in Jewish connexion, not that of the Church. Consider the circumstances in which this prophecy was given. Not when Israel sang in the first joy of redemption, but after they had gone through all the difficulties of the wilderness, after they had known failure. The question now to be settled was, whether Satan had a title to shut the door of the kingdom against them, because of failure after redemption. This is met by learning the abiding power and value of God's work. His all controlling power will bring them in, in spite of everything. It is not through what we have wrought that we are brought in at the end, any

more than at the beginning, but through what God has wrought. And in the value of that He sees them, not only without iniquity and perverseness, but as trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, at the very time they were murmuring against Him, despising the manna, &c., &c. When He is settling the question with Israel it is very different. He then passes over nothing, but here it is His judgment *about* Israel. He knew what they were when He brought them out and separated them from the nations: and God is not a man that He should repent. What can change His purpose? Hath He said, and shall He not make it good. And remember what He has said of believers. Balaam would gladly have found means to bring a curse on God's people; but he is obliged to say, "He hath blessed, and I *cannot* reverse it." If God be for us, who *can* be against us? When it is a question of justification He beholds no iniquity in His people. Experience of the wilderness makes us need something more than

Exod. xv, even that which this chapter teaches us. It is said of Israel, all the way through what hath God wrought? It is not "what a heart there is in me," so desperately wicked even after conversion! but what a heart there is in God for me. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob:" Balaam in vain attempts it; his efforts only bring out each time a fresh declaration, a further aspect of blessing. Note, Balaam never said, "let me live the life of the righteous," he had no heart for that, "but let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." It is *God* who brings us in through *His* work. *His* worth, *His* word are mine, to rest my heart upon. God must fail before a believer can be lost.

APHORISMS.

It is better to keep Christ's character than one's cloak.

The world never draws towards Christians, and it cannot do so, for its

own nature cannot allow it ; but Christians may, to their own loss, draw near the world, because the old man is still in them.

You cannot be in the truth if you ramble from the person of the Son of man.

The things which God will separate in judgment are already separated in His mind, and they are as much so now as when they will be seen, the one in the lake of fire, and the other in heaven.

Christian liberty is never liberty of *will* : the liberty of the Holy Ghost is absolute.

The seventh of Romans presents the legal form of the conflict : the Galatians the Christian form of the conflict. In the seventh of Romans there is nothing about the Spirit ; but Galatians speaks of the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusting against the flesh. In Romans it is about the *law*, and not about Christ nor the Spirit.

There may be great activity of service without its being the service of God in the Spirit.

“That we should be holy and without blame before him in love,” is that we should be there according to God’s nature and character. For He is holy, blameless in His ways, and He is love.

The difference between the Holy Ghost’s reasoning and the saint’s is seen in this, that the Holy Ghost reasons from what *God is*, to what we shall experience from Him; while the saint reasons from what *he is*, to what he may expect from God.

The question of justification is presented in Romans and Galatians; divine government in the wilderness in Peter; the communication of life in John.

“OUR REST IS NOT HERE.”

“This is not your rest, because it is polluted.”
Micah ii, 10.

“This earth is not thy rest,”
Beloved of the Lord;
Of higher hopes possessed,
Than it can e’er afford.
Thou hast this faithless world resigned,
That thou a nobler rest might find.

“This earth is not thy rest,”
Thou art an heir of heaven ;
To mansions of the blest,
A title has been given ;
To thee, and all the ransomed band,
A title signed with God’s own hand.

“This earth is not thy rest,”
’Tis a polluted place ;
It spurned its heavenly guest,
And set at nought His grace ;
And still it hates His cross and name,
And glories in its sin and shame.

“This earth is not thy rest,”
Then why of griefs complain ;
Him, whom thou hast confess’d,
Knew sorrow, too, and shame.
Thou would’st not be unlike thy Lord ?
Thou would’st not falsify His word ?

“This earth is not thy *rest*,”
Then make it not thy *home* ;
Build not on earth thy nest,
But wait for Him to come ;
Who’ll take thee to thy proper rest,
Amid the glorified and blest.

A. M.

TRY THE SPIRITS—CHRIST THE TEST.

1 John iv.

When this scripture was written, it was not any more than with us, merely, the setting forth of the grace and goodness of God in a world that knew Him not—in a world of sin and misery—though it was a blessed privilege to be the channel of such a testimony as the gospel, the messenger to bring in the wondrous message of love to this wretched world; which of course met with opposition, but was a wonderful and sensible blessing to man. The Spirit had another service to perform—another truth to unfold. “Ungodly men had crept in unawares,” and it became necessary to warn against evil.

Now it is far more difficult to preserve blessing when it is brought in, than to testify of it at first. So we find in Jude the exhortation given “earnestly

to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints:" not merely to publish the tidings of the blessing that had been brought in, and so testify of the common salvation, but earnestly to contend for the faith, that they might preserve the blessing, that had been thus brought in, pure and uncorrupted. And here we read, "Believe not every spirit." It is far happier to have to say "Believe the spirit," but because of error it had to be said "Believe not every spirit." The mystery of iniquity, which was to come in, and was already in the world, required it. All the apostles had to warn thus against the evil which had come in; and John more especially, as being the last of them. "Try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Men had slept, and the enemy had sown tares. Satan always seeks by violence and opposition to resist the coming in of truth, and to hinder its reception; and if he cannot do that, then, when it is come in, he will corrupt the truth.

Evil men have crept in unawares, false prophets or false spirits are gone out into the world; holy kind of men it may be in their way, but false prophets, who attack true and simple souls with great apparent power, and with the mingling of much real truth with their error. But error must be put down in the heart and conscience.

It is a great mercy to have orthodoxy professed. By orthodoxy I mean the cardinal truths of the gospel, although of course the profession of orthodoxy is not life. There may be orthodoxy and not life, especially in these days; and we have to come back to where the Spirit of God will keep the soul in the profession of the truth. There may not be salvation, though there may be orthodoxy of profession. The Lord may allow intellect to work, and then the question may arise as with Pilate "what is truth?"

We find in men two things, scepticism and infidelity. The sceptic doubts all truth; the infidel denies the truth altogether, and says, there is no truth,

no knowledge, no doctrine. That is what infidelity always will do. But there is difficulty in every truth. The consequence is, when men get tired of their sins, and think about giving them up, they begin to enquire about truth, turn very serious for awhile, and attend to their religious duties as they call it; but, finding it difficult, they tire and soon grow weary of it, and seek to get hold of something that promises certainty, and at the same time saves them the trouble of knowing truth for themselves. So they look for something established on human authority, and lean on the judgment and opinions of men. This is authority in a bad sense, man's word. God exercises true authority over the conscience. The truth is authority. But men want something that will save them the exercise of their hearts and consciences before God. In human authority the conscience is not with God, and man would be independent of God. Now this degrades man beneath what he was intended to be,

for his true position is to be dependent on God. This is man's true glory. The conscience must be brought into contact with God, into the presence of God; and that which accomplishes this is true ministry. *Whatever ministry fails to do this, or has not this for its object, is not of God*; because it is putting something between the soul and God. If ministry be real, it brings God directly to the conscience through the word; whereas that which is false, stands between God and the conscience; and this will enable us to detect the difference, and to discern at once whether ministry be false or true.

God has promised to guide the humble, and He will secure the humble soul against false prophets.

The word of God never treats man's mind as being competent to judge it; for it would be the judge itself of what is authority over the conscience. People have confounded the power of the word to work in the conscience with a competency to judge the word;

and it is an awful thing. Man's mind is incapable of judging God's word. If it were capable, the word would not be God's at all, for that would be supposing man's mind to be equal with God, and there would be no God. The natural conscience may judge of individual commands, such as, "Thou shalt not steal," &c. I am capable also of judging so far as to know that it is good, *when it has acted on my soul*. It is like taking food. I may be entirely ignorant of the processes of nutrition and digestion, yet I may know the full value of food, and be conscious of the invigorating effect produced by the food when eaten. There are many things that may be estimated when they have acted on me, though I may have no competency to judge of them but by their effect. God's word tells me that I am thus and thus, the soul receives the effect by divine power; *that* is the word judging me, not my judging the word. But the word can produce in me the competency to judge, and these are often confounded in reasoning.

Where am I to find the competency? That is the question. It is in the word, because it comes and approves itself to the heart by acting with power on the conscience. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God," it begins with power.

"Believe not every spirit." It is not simply the truth and man's mind are at work: there are false spirits acting on man's mind. While poor man thinks himself independent, there is a spirit working which is either of God or the devil, either bringing truth or error to the soul. "False prophets are gone out into the world." The confession of "Jesus come in the flesh is of God." That which puts all to the test is the real acknowledgment of Christ come in the flesh. It proves the truth of the person; it is the proper faith of him who speaks, and not a mere confession. Because if I have faith in a thing I am subject to it; that is, confessing Christ, I am subject to Christ. No evil spirit is that; it would

not be an evil spirit if it were. "Try the spirits." Unless Jesus Christ is owned as God manifest in the flesh it is not of God. "Many false prophets are gone out into the world," and the owning the lordship and authority of Jesus is to be the test of everything. You will find a thousand things set up instead, but whatever spirit does not bow to the Lord Jesus Christ is not of God.

"Ye are of God little children." He had no thought of putting them on their own competency or ability to judge, or on the authority of other men, but on the Spirit of God. "And have overcome them, for greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." It is as though he said, if the Holy Ghost is in you, it will overcome, if not, Satan will surely get the better. The Church of God is, as it were, the great prize between Satan and God. So with Pharaoh and Israel when he refused to let the people go. "Thus saith the Lord, let my people go." Immediately the answer is, "who is

the Lord that I should obey him," though there it was to bring out the manifestation of the power of God in His judgments upon Pharaoh that He might prove Himself the mightier, as Jethro said, "now know I that the Lord is greater than all Gods, for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them. (Exod. xviii, 11.) By and by He will shew this out more fully when the Lord appears and Satan is bound. Then there will be an end of this conflict; but now it is carried on in our individual walk; and God would now exercise men's faith and consciences, and manifest His power in keeping them.

We get here the power of walk, "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." One of the most alarming symptoms in the world, the religious world, in the present day is the idea that there is power in the truth to preserve. There is power in the truth to preserve; but the question is whether the soul holds fast the truth. *Unless my thoughts and my heart are in*

the truth, there will be no power in the truth to me. It is very certain God will keep His truth, but is my heart kept? if not, the expectation of being kept is the mere confidence of man's mind. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." The only power of victory is the power of the Spirit of God on the affections and consciences of the saints, and then the heart will be set on Christ and the things of Christ, to love Him, enjoy Him, and serve Him better. The conflict and difficulty are rather when the truth is brought in question, than when it first goes forth in power. If I am not kept by the Spirit of God, I shall not be able to resist the daily solicitations of sin.

Man may grow tired of his sins, and tired of the world, for he has long been in bondage to them, and desire sincerely to break off his sins. He is attracted at first by that which promises him deliverance, and is glad to close with the offer, and so breaks off from his sins for awhile, and is very religious,

and seems devoted too; but his soul does not continue; he does not like the trials and tribulations which arise; he cannot bear to lose his friends, and his prosperity and his place in the world; and then error is found the easier thing, and there must come a falling away, and so it will be but a little flock. False religion might make a monk, but can never put the conscience into the presence of God. Error quarrels not with men's passions, for false religion, in the main, ever ministers to the passions, the thoughts, the feelings of men: and thus it is false religion which suits the world better than truth, because it suits itself to man, and the mass will ever follow error. So Paul had to say, "All Asia is turned away from me." The apostle did not expect that truth would have power over the world, but plainly declared that error would. So we see when the Lord allows the sifting of a large body of people on a point of truth, the greater number will adopt the error. "They are of the world,

therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." "But ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them." If God were in them, they were kept; if not, they would fall away from the truth. We must rely on what has been declared by the Spirit of God, rather than upon what is the expectation of man. The apostle himself believed in the power of truth as much as any now, but he had not the vain expectation that the truth had power to reform the world. "Ye are of God, little children." This is the guard, not of the power, but of the means.

"We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us." It is not said 'he that overcomes,' but he that heareth us is of the truth. He had the spiritual power of discerning what was truth. The means of ascertaining truth from error was the recognition of the word; whosoever did not submit to the written word was not listened to. Though they might speak like angels, it was not

of God, it was of themselves. "He that is of God heareth us." I could not say, you must hear me or you will be lost; but I could say this, if you do not hear the message of the gospel, which I speak to you, you will perish, because it is the truth of God, and you are to search for yourselves and see. I am no guarantee of truth; I have it from God; but in the apostles I get the guarantee and the test of truth. They could say, a man must hear them or be lost: they were, so to speak, the depository of truth. One may come to me and say, it is difficult; well, I reply, be humble, be patient, and you will learn. God has given something that is to be the test of truth; if you are of God you will believe it. But if any one hindered any from hearing an apostle, he could say at once he was not of God; for "he that is of God heareth us." Their *immediate* testimony is the test; God was telling of truth and error. No man now is the immediate vessel or guarantee of truth.

Mark further. The moment I require anything to establish the authority of the word, I take away the authority of the word: for the thing rested on is of course that which is supposed to establish the word, and not the word itself. If I take anything as proving the word of God, and so believe it, that is not believing the word. The Spirit of God and the word of God must go together. The word will not do alone; for I may attempt to judge of the word by my own private judgment, and so get wrong. The Spirit of God will not do alone either, for I may mistake my own fancy for the Spirit; they go together. Then the moment the word reaches my heart, it is absolute authority, and the word judges me. When they are both received into the heart, when thus in complete possession of me, Satan cannot touch me, because they will allow nothing of the flesh (self-will, &c.) to work. Is there evil in me? They will enable me to judge it in myself, and in everything around me. Such an one is guaranteed against

all error. He has the Spirit and the word. These are the comforting, peaceful, blessed means of guarding us from all evil.

The effect of a man's being regenerated is, he is brought to God, having perfect peace; brought into an entirely new world, where God is revealing Himself in His word; and he has his soul constantly delighting in the word. There all the wisdom of God is brought out for my soul to be exercised in, (endless and safe!) learning all that God is; and what we have all to seek is to be occupied with the truth, every day knowing more and more of Christ; delighting in and feeding on Christ as the true God and perfect man, subject in all things to His Father: and all this not so as to be able to write an essay, but as the Christ in whom I know God and man; loving Him every day; living by Him every day, as He lived by the Father; depending on the Father. Then everything that is not of Him strikes upon my soul; it is **THAT CHRIST** who is touched, and it

affects the whole harmony of the soul. *Be sure of this, if it is not the living power of a living Christ, known and enjoyed in your soul, you cannot withstand error.* It must be truth held in communion with the person of Christ, or it will not guard you against error. The mere truth is no match for Satan. I would not venture to meet Satan on the truth, if I were not called to do it to serve the saints and for the glory of God, because I should be afraid. I know God will keep me when in His service, but I do not therefore cast myself down from off the pinnacle of the temple because it is written in His word, "He will give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

We get the traits of the two families set forth in Cain and Abel; in Cain, hatred, violence, and wickedness; in Abel, suffering, righteousness, and love. The eternal life which was with the Father is communicated to the Christian, producing in him Christ's ways, thoughts, and feelings. "Every

one that loveth is born of God." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, for God is love." Love is the inner development of the divine nature. As I cannot enjoy or exercise the faculties and affections of a man if I have not the nature of a man, no more can I enjoy God's affections unless I have the nature of God. It is an old remark that "knowledge cannot love;" you must have this nature, you must be born of God, for God is love, or you cannot love. Man's searching gets nothing. Unless he knows the love of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot love. Suppose there is a general notion of God, and that His eternal Godhead is seen and acknowledged; if I have knowledge and try to understand things I shall be confounded; for when the state of the whole world is looked upon what do I see? Why, three-fourths of it given up to idolatry, worshipping the devil; and oppression, degradation, and misery overwhelming all; aye, multitudes even in this great city: (London :) and the

mind gets into confusion. Men may try to say that it is all needful for the general government of man, but this will not do for those who are suffering. If it be said, sin is the cause of it all, then I say, if sin has come in, what can I, as a sinner, have to say to God? how can I meet God? It is of no use to tell me that He is good: He is that; but I am responsible to God; and the more I get into the truth, the more I am confounded and thrown almost into despair. Neither scepticism nor authority will do anything for me here. But the moment I get Christ, the whole thing is clear; Christ clears up all. I have not got something now that *can* deal with it, but God who *has* dealt with it. God is seen in Him as dealing with this creation in all its sin and misery. Then I say, sin has ruined us; all are guilty; I am guilty; but He has met my sin in the very way I wanted it. When I was in perplexity and despair about my sins, and when I found no way of meeting God, then it was *God who met me*, and

showed me how He had settled it all to His glory in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who met all for me, coming into the world to be a propitiation for our sins, coming into all the misery to put it away and give Himself as the source of life and putter away of that sin which would hinder the enjoyment of God; and then for the perfecting of this love to introduce us into that which is above. He came down that He might take us up with Him. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Herein is our love (or love with us) made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world." I get the love manifested in His coming to me and taking me up into the presence of God perfect in Himself. The communication of the nature gives the power to love; and then we get the object, "Not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for

our sins." Thus we get the object for our love to rest upon and be occupied with; always elevating, always satisfying. It is not the mysticism that delights in its own exercise, working on itself; but there is an infinite and blessed object, and we are brought into association with, and likeness to, that blessed object; not allowing in us the least fear, all being taken away by His divine work, and we at rest perfectly and happy with God.

Whatever does not make our hearts know God as perfect in love to ourselves and in ourselves is not the whole truth; whatever does not set me in the presence of God without a single fear remaining so that I can enjoy His love, is not adequate to His love to me. The Lord make us of quick understanding in His fear, and direct our hearts into His love, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

THE CANON OF TRUTH.

There is a very common mistake as to the sense of the word *heresy* in scripture. It may be something definite; it may be truth, it may be error. But no just apprehension can be arrived at as to what it really is, except by looking to the essential meaning of the word. It simply means "choice;" and thus it will not be difficult to see how this transgresses against God and against the place we should hold towards Him, and in respect of all that we are to receive from Him. As to ourselves, we know the word of the Lord, "You have not *chosen* me, but I have *chosen* you." So also in all revelation made to man, it stood in God's good pleasure to reveal what He pleased; in His divine wisdom giving such relations between truth and truth as was necessary to make Himself duly known. To reverse this order is *heresy*. Man a sinner, (and if such be the mercy vouchsafed,) recovered to God by grace, is himself the choice of God; and grace forms the place and rule of subjection and dependence. Treating it, however, as confined to truth revealed, it is the duty of the believer humbly to be subject to it, rightly dividing it; since the word, accord-

ing to the Spirit, teaches those who are obedient to Christ. The separation of truth from Christ Himself must prevent blessing and growth, and is often the cause of the endeavour to combine in a formal creed the truth necessary to the child of God and the Lord's servant.

There is another source of this evil, viz., that however needful one portion of the truth may be at this or that season, there is, (notwithstanding a succession of revelation) a need of every part for the work of God ; for His husbandry and for the building up of the saints. However the spirit of apostasy may work, inasmuch as the promises are made to the overcoming of the corruption of the day and time in Christianity, those Christians are the most "thoroughly furnished" who respect the whole canon of truth as given to complete them in Christ. Truth will not be found in parcelling it out and in balancing it. Such a course would make us think that souls, in conscience towards God, were not the intended objects of it ; whereas, as seen in God, all is perfect, and each part is a whole ; but so a whole as to be in perfect relation to the rest, and without the exclusion of any. *Christ* is what we receive of God ; and if any portion of truth be taken, as in Christ,

it will never exclude any other portion, and it will ever have its proportions fitted to Christ, and to which every other part can attach.

If there are particular times and seasons when some portion of truth is specially called for, so there are times and seasons when some portion, which may be highly necessary and important is, either through ignorance or corruption, omitted. Or, if what is material being omitted, a sickly demand of one truth occur in minds from defect of another—all this is, or borders on, heresy.

No truth and no order promulgated of God is needless. Hurrying forth when we discover some revealed truth, instead of waiting on God for its certainty and its place, or founding anything merely on the contradiction to falsehood, is in likelihood an approach to this sin.

What shall we say then? Conscience before a holy God is the needed condition of the soul; and, in subjection to Christ, a simple acceptance of the word—even if that word appears unusual—giving time to the soul in the presence of God, will keep it in the safe path.

These considerations are the more needful because apostacy, or all that prepares

for it, makes such strides; and the dissolution of all that imposed any wholesome fear on man progresses so rapidly that a distinctive view of what constitutes "a good confession" will call on souls, desirous of walking with God, to enter earnestly on the question of the "canon of truth."

What is intended is not *the canon of scripture*, (that has its own various ground and evidence,) but the canon of truth, as needed in confession, and for the enjoyment of the peace and the power of God; and for practical ends, as a sequel to them, in the knowledge of His will, in wisdom and spiritual understanding. The value of this must be apparent.

The principle of faith, excluding every object that could come between us and the Lord, is the point on which he who had been in the third heaven made an unrelenting stand in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Faith is towards the future, because the future is towards that which is unseen; and it accepts its rule from God. Nothing could be more righteous than the demand of faith from man, as the road of return afforded by God to one who had sinned, and who continued in insubjection through sin, and had become subject to another,

even to the enemy, the revolted one. Distrust of God was the door by which he left God, and the door of entrance to his lost and estranged condition. He had eaten of the fruit of the tree, and was shut out thenceforth from the tree of life in the garden. God now plants the tree of life outside the garden, and outside the camp too, and calls on man to eat of it. Because in this tree of God's planting is found sin and death undone, and life restored and unassailable. Here was faith, as the reverse of man's departure from God, and restoration thereby. Wonderful and righteous are the ways of God, full of grace and mercy and truth! This then is the way of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." And, this being accomplished, it is given to man to wait for his being taken in again to a higher paradise; and therefore it is said, "to wait for the Son from heaven." To as many as receive him he gives power to become the sons of God; even to as many as believe on that name—the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Now, being sons, it is needful, in order to obedience, to know what confession we are called to as waiting for the Son from heaven. All the remainder of the canon

of truth lies here. The Lord is coming to take to Himself His great power and reign; in which time the earth shall be subject, and a king shall rule in righteousness, and princes in judgment, and we as sons of God, and therefore heirs with Christ, shall reign with Him. It is nothing therefore but the present knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that will afford a rule of confession and obedience. For the whole frame of the world, its order and objects, can be no guide, since it is in independence still, and not returned to God; and under its present rule never to return. The believer is in Christ and the world is not. The child of God waits for the Son from heaven—who is Lord of all: and the world awaits but the doom of its final departure from Him. "The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full," therefore God did not bring His people into their inheritance. So it is with the world now. We see Him at the right hand of God, as Lord of all, according to the will of the Father; though the time is not yet of all things being made subject to Him. The external form of our obedience is in acknowledgment of Him there, and to come: sanctified, or separated, not only out

of our once lost state, but sanctified to Him and justified in the grace of our God, out of the world which lieth in condemnation and in the power of the wicked one. It is not a question of being morally better than the world around us (though this is the case essentially by grace) in an external respect: but of being separate as subject to Christ, who is at the right hand of God:—and subject for suffering in obeying Christ; and in the intelligence of Christ, subject to the authorities that he, yet taking no part, in ordering the world, which is in disobedience, as are all that connect themselves with the world. We are “called unto the kingdom and glory” to be revealed. I speak of the regenerate, by the faith of the Son of God.

To these things the gospel of the grace and the gospel of the kingdom are the introduction. For, though the proclamation must be grace, it is the kingdom of God that is specifically preached. God now establishes the way of grace, and it is by faith, that it may be by grace. This would conduct us through the epistle to the Romans; the church being only touched upon at the very close; and it is to a considerable extent the force of those to the Thessalonians, though not exclusively, as

the interest of the saints in heavenly places is appealed to. The epistle to the Hebrews, of Jude, and James and Peter are confined to it. The speciality of the Church in heavenly places, and her union with Christ by faith of His name, as Son of God, and the revelation of the power of resurrection to the believer was reserved to Paul. The character of the grace is everlasting and indefeasible; its place the place of communion; and its hope the being taken before the trial; walking with God in the judgment of the world and loving the coming of the Lord. The divine life, and the practical result in blessing given to communion, is the department given to John. The canon of truth can bear no omission but with damage to the perfecting of the saint in his relation to God, and to his confession in the world of Christ and His glory.

To lay stress on any of these things to the exclusion of the other, is an evil *choice* in order to clothe oneself with the peculiarity of the doctrine, and it is not subjection to *truth*. If I take the kingdom, and leave out the Church, I deprive the saint of the highest consolations, and lower the ground of his affections, and alter injuriously the character of his hope. If I leave

out the kingdom, and take the Church as my exclusive theme, I render the walk of the saint unstable on the earth, and cut off all the doctrine of godliness, to be exercised while in the body, in subjection to the Lord. If I adopt the divine life as the sole relict of truth, I leave the saint to be absorbed by the frame of the world and to a defective conscience, which sanctification to God in the world can alone sustain.

If the character of the service of the divine life was revealed last, it has, nevertheless, without doubt, its appropriate fullness within itself; but I speak of the evil of the heresy of excluding what preceded it, and is necessary to complete the chosen one in Christ. The divine life and attraction to it creates a fund to the soul in an evil day, which the ruin around makes needful, and God, in the wonders of His grace, has not left us without. But "there must be heresies that those who are approved *may be made manifest.*"

The internal man is not the same as the *external man as confessor of the Lord.* The new man is the risen man, the healed leper of the eighth day. Where the blood has cleansed there the Spirit can follow. When death has worked there is life; and the saint becomes the living sacrifice, and

by faith advancing continually in the divine character lives in the atmosphere of the love in which God lives, and bears testimony of it.

Part of the "canon of truth," and indeed very much, may be at times in the world in abeyance, by ignorance and corruption, and the revival of truth (which is the work of the power of God) makes the saint very responsible; as also the preaching of the good tidings makes the world so.

The knowledge of righteousness, before the reformation, and the peace wrought for the believer, were forgotten, and were brought to light amid the darkness. The truth of the Church and of the functions of the Holy Ghost were not reached by the reformation. The truth of the kingdom has been perceived; but its place and importance for practical ends in the saints, being heirs in a country not yet their own, but strangers in it, though under their Lord, has been but little apprehended. It is a kingdom of which the saints are expectant heirs; and where they receive the reward of present faithful confession, and reward of service and duty, at the coming forth of their Lord in glory. I believe this confession is often referred to under the name of "the faith." See the

end of 1 Timothy; and "the good confession of Christ that His kingdom was not of this (present) world, else would His servants fight. To wait thus—serving the Lord that is looked for—severed from the order of the world, and returned to God and dependent upon Him, is "the faith" in this respect. (The Gentile Church neither stands in goodness nor in faith in the living God by faith.) Christianity either says, "Lord, Lord," and does not; or denies the Lord to whom glory alone belongeth. Nations are, often, a mock Israel; but they shall come into the tribulation and judgment; and the Lord will be magnified with His saints in the day of His appearing.

The kingdom of our Lord which, with the virtues and grace that are appropriate to it, is the distinctive confession of the saints on earth, forms the conscience on earth, keeping them for the Lord. The affections as well as the knowledge of the risen Jesus cast a gloom on any part the *saints take in the world*. Whereas the place given them as expectant heirs marks easily the present things (except as immediately ordered by the Lord) as in the hand of the enemy; while the love of God shed abroad in their hearts glorifies Jesus

as Lord and Saviour, and, in a good confession they overcome by His blood and *their* testimony, and shall sit on His throne as He overcame and sits on His Father's throne.

FRAGMENT.

It alters the character of Christianity to make it a system of commandments. Give me *an express text*, says one, and I will bow to it. Now this is an unholy and bad principle. If a child knew the will of its father, and yet demanded some express command before it would obey, that would be a bad child. It is a very common evil of this day to demand an abstract command. If I have the Holy Spirit I must do what I know to be the mind of God—of course checked by the written word—but wherever I have the knowledge of God's mind it is binding on me.

WHAT IS DEATH?

For the unbeliever, nothing can be more terrible than death. It is justly and scripturally called "the king of terrors." It is the judicial close of the being of the first Adam. What is beyond? It is not merely so for the animal nature, though that be true, but the more it is considered in connexion with man's moral nature, the more terrible does it become. Everything in which man has had his home, his thoughts, his whole being employed, is closed and perished for ever. "When his breath goeth forth, *all* his thoughts perish." Man finds in it an end to every hope, every project, to all his thoughts and plans. The spring of them all is broken. The being in which he moved is gone: he can count upon nothing more. The busy scene in which his whole life has been, knows him no more. He himself fails and is extinct. None have to do with him any more as belonging to it. His nature has given way, powerless to

resist this master to which it belongs, and who now asserts his dreadful rights. But this is far from being all. Man indeed, as man alive in this world, sinks down into nothing. But why? *Sin* has come in; with sin, conscience; with sin, Satan's power: still more; with sin, God's judgment. Death is the expression and witness of all this. It is the wages of sin, terror to the conscience, Satan's power over us, for he has the power of death. Can God help here? Alas, it is his own judgment on sin. Death seems but as the proof that sin does not pass unnoticed, and is the terror and plague of the conscience, as witness of God's judgment, the officer of justice to the criminal, and the proof of his guilt in the presence of coming judgment. How can it but be terrible? It is the seal upon the fall and ruin and condemnation of the first Adam. And he has nothing but this old nature. He cannot subsist as a living man before God. Death is written on him, for he is a sinner, he cannot deliver himself.

He is guilty withal and condemned. The judgment comes. But Christ has come in. He has come into death,—O wondrous truth, the Prince of life! What is death now for the believer?

Now mark, reader, the full force of this wonderful, unspeakable, intervention of God. We have seen death to be man's weakness, the break up of his being, Satan's power, God's judgment, the wages of sin. But all this is in connexion with the first Adam, whose portion, because of sin, death and judgment are. We have seen the double character of death; the failure of life, or living power, in man, and the witness and conductor into the judgment of God. Christ has been made sin for us; He has undergone death, passed through it as Satan's power and as God's judgment. Death, with its causes, has been met in its every character by Christ.

The judgment of God has been fully borne by Him before the day of judgment comes. Death, as the wages of

sin, has been passed through. It has, as a cause of terror to the soul, in every sense, wholly lost its power for the believer. The physical fact *may* take place; for so wholly has Christ put away its power that that is not necessarily the case. We shall not all die though we shall all be changed. Desiring, says the apostle, not to "be unclothed, but be clothed upon, that mortality may be *swallowed up of life.*" Such is the power of life in Christ.

But death has much more than passed away. Death is ours, says the apostle, as all things are. By the blessed Lord's entering into it for me, death and judgment too, is become my salvation. The sin, of which it was the wages, has been put away by death itself. The judgment has been borne for me there. Death is not terror to my soul; it is not the sign of anger, but the blessedest and fullest proof of love, because Christ came into it. The very power of the law against me, I am freed from, for it has power over a man only as long as he lives; but in Christ

I am dead to the law already. *God has, by death, met sin and judgment already.* In a word, Christ, the sinless One, having come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, my whole condition, as in the first Adam, has been dealt with; dealt with so that all its consequences have been righteously undergone; and *by death*, the old man, Satan's power, sin, judgment, mortality itself, which are connected with the old, or sinful, man, are passed and done with for ever. I live before God now in the one who is risen, after enduring all that belonged to the old for me. God has dealt with the old man, and all its fruits and consequences for me, in the new, who has taken even the natural consequences attached to it, and gone through its power as in the hand of Satan. Death has freed me for ever from everything that belonged to, and awaited the old man, as alive. First, condemnation and judgment are entirely over, as a question of the soul's acceptance. The dreadful ordeal is passed; but by another—so that it

is my deliverance from it according to the righteousness of God.

The floods which destroyed the Egyptians were a wall to Israel on the right hand and on the left, the path of safety out of Egypt. The salvation of God was there. Egypt and its oppressive power were left behind them. Death is deliverance and salvation to us. Secondly, what is it become in practice? In the power of Christ's resurrection, I am quickened. He is become my life. I can dispense, if I may venture so to speak, with the life of the old man: I have that of the new. But He who, now risen, is my life, passed through death. I reckon myself dead. Hence it is never said that we are *to die* to sin. The old man does not and would not; the new man has no sin to die to. We are said *to be dead*, and commanded to reckon ourselves dead. Rom. vi, 11,—“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Col. iii, 3,—“For ye are dead, and

your life is hid with Christ in God ;” and then we are directed to mortify our members which are on the earth, in the power of this new life, and of the Holy Ghost which dwells in us. I have the title, then, to reckon myself dead. What a gain is death to me in this respect, if really the desires of the new man are in me ! yea, what deliverance and power ! What is dead, for faith, is the old, hindering, harassing, sinful, man ; in which, if responsible to God, I was lost, and unable to meet Him.” “ *When,*” says the apostle, “ we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” (Rom. vii, 5.) But Rom. viii, 9,—“ Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” The flesh is not our place of standing before God. We have acknowledged ourselves lost and ruined in it. That was the standing of the first Adam, and we were in it. Law applied to it, death, judgment. But I am not in it now,

but in the second. So as regards ordinances, the apostle says, "If ye be dead with Christ, from the rudiments of the world, why as though living [or alive] in the world are ye subject to ordinances?" For faith, we are dead, not alive, in the world. Hence, also, everything that practically makes us realize this—trial, suffering, sorrow—is gain. It makes morally true, and real, in our souls, that we are dead, and thus delivers from the old man. "In all these things is the life of the Spirit." It is disengaged and delivered from the obscuring and deadening influence of the old man. These sorrows and breaches in life are the details of death morally. But of the death of what? Of the old man. All is gain. Thirdly, if death comes in fact, the death of what? Of what is mortal, of the old man. Does the new risen life die? It has passed through death in Christ, and this has been realized in us. It cannot die. It is Christ. Hence, in dying, it simply leaves death behind. It quits what is mortal. We are ab-

sent from the body and present with the Lord. It was previously outwardly connected with what is mortal. It is no longer so. We are absent from the body, and present with the Lord. We depart and we are with Christ. It is true faith looks for a greater triumph—we shall be clothed upon—still this is God's power. The old man, thank God, never revives. God, because of His Spirit that dwells in us, will quicken even our mortal bodies. The life of Christ will be displayed in a glorious body. *We shall be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren.* This is the fruit of divine power. But meanwhile death itself is always deliverance, because, having a new life, it is our being disencumbered from the old man which hindered and hemmed our way. It is our being with Christ. How sweet and refreshing is the thought! When once we have seized the difference of the old and new man, the reality of the new life we have received in Christ, the death of the old

will be known and felt to be true and real gain. No doubt, God's time is best, because He alone knows what is needed in the way of discipline and exercise to form our souls for Himself, and He may preserve us to know the power of this life in Christ, so that mortality should be swallowed up without our dying.

But if death is the ceasing of the old man, it is but the ceasing of sin, hindrance, trouble. We have done with the old man, in which we were guilty before God: righteously done with it, because Christ has died for us—for ever done with it, because we live in the power of the new. Such is death to the believer. "To depart and to be with Christ is far better." As judgment, Christ has taken it; as to the power of sin, it is the death of the very nature it lives in. As actual mortality, it is deliverance from it to be with Christ in the new man which enjoys Him. Who, as to the proper gain of it, would not die?

If we live to serve Christ, the sor-

row of this world is worth while; but it is not the less sorrow in itself, whatever blessing may cheer us through it. To us to live, is Christ; to die, gain. It is but the old man that dies; our misery first, our enemy afterwards. Of course this supposes divine life, and in practice the heart to be elsewhere than in the things the old man lives in.

DIVINE FELLOWSHIP.

1 John i.

It is a great mercy that God has not left us in the dark as to our state before Him. Now men, by nature, have a notion of judgment. Even the heathen have this; and much of the Christianity of the present day is little more. Men try to conduct themselves in such sort as to stand in judgment, tempered perhaps by mercy. They confound what is never confounded in the word of God—judgment and mercy.

Now Christ did not come to leave

men there; He did not die to leave men there. He came to put men in a totally different condition. If the Son of God came into the world and died, it must have been for some great purpose. He brought down into this world the whole light of grace and truth,—all that was needed to change the whole relation of a man to God:—He came with it.

In the third verse we get the object of writing this scripture, that we may have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It speaks of such an entire putting away of sin, and such a knowledge of God's thoughts about the Father and the Son as that we may have fellowship with them. What a wonderful thing! Not a mere natural thought of judgment, but companionship of heart with the Father and the Son. Does that leave any uncertainty as to our state at the great day? No. He is not to have fellowship and intimate friendship with us and then condemn us. No. There is such a cleansing as that all that could

hinder this fellowship is for ever put away.

Mark how far a man's thought is from that naturally. He says, I have not this fellowship, this joy. God is in heaven and I on the earth. Well, if it is so, you have not got the good of the gospel. If you have not fellowship with the Father, you are not thinking about Him at all, or else you are dreading Him. You have not fellowship, cannot have fellowship, if you feel criminal before Him. It is anything but fellowship. The will is not broken down when there is dread. But how is this? Why! is not your heart given to pleasure, to money? Are you not after the flesh, after things which are quite contrary to God, and contrary to fellowship with God? "The carnal mind is enmity to God." That is our state naturally, and what the word of God calls "darkness;"—not merely being in the dark, but darkness itself, just as God is light. It is in *you* that the evil is. There is the insensibility of a drunkard; but besides this, there

is the fact that he loves to gratify a vile lust. "Ye were sometime darkness."

And what is this darkness? Corruption of nature. Compare yourself with Christ. He is the pattern of what is good. Are not you just the very opposite? How came you to be so? All the objects for which you are living are just the opposite of that for which Christ was living. You are living for pleasure, for money, for fame, and for a thousand other things, while He was ever living unto God. I am not speaking of your outward life, but of your motives. All that is governing your life is the opposite of what governed Christ. Suppose a person brought up in filth from his youth; he does not know that it is filth. He has got accustomed to it! And why? Because his heart is as filthy as his clothes or his house. Now we are so accustomed to sin that we do not see it to be sin. What does that prove? Just that we love it. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into

the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The rejection of Jesus is the proof of it. You may say that if you had lived then you would not have done as they did, you would not reject Him. Are you sure of that? What are you doing now? Do you see any beauty in *Him*? Do you see one bit of darkness *in yourself*? When He is brought in testimony before you, you do not see beauty in Him. *That* is darkness. We love our lusts, and we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. That is our state. Christ is not the thing that governs and possesses our hearts day by day. If so, how can we have fellowship? "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." But you are darkness, and how can you have fellowship with Him? You are darkness in your conduct, in your will, and in your judgment; for your judgment is governed by your will, your motives, desires, &c. He is holiness itself, "light," which is pure and which manifests everything. But if He

manifests everything in you, how then can you have fellowship with Him ?

Now this is a message of what God is, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." He cannot give up His light, He cannot have fellowship with darkness; and it would not be a blessing if He did. But it is a message brought down here. It is not in heaven, but here that we have the message, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." If you call yourself a Christian, you are saying that you have fellowship with him; but if you are walking in darkness you are deceiving yourself. This is a fearful thing. God is so totally out of men's minds, that they have not the sense that they have got away from Him. God is light. There cannot be the slightest communion with darkness. God cannot undo Himself, and destroy His own holiness to have fellowship with darkness. You are deceiving yourself.

Now there is another thing; "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." God will not leave you away from Himself. If He makes you happy, it is in Himself. Now this is what natural conscience dreads—to be in God's presence. God, as He is, without modifying one bit of His holiness, puts us there in the light. Then I am in the light as God is in the light. This was in Christ. What do we see in Christ? Holiness in every thought. Israel undertook to obey God under terror, Christ in love. Men undertake this as Israel did, under terror of judgment. Men do undertake to do God's will in view of judgment. Now Christ said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." That is what Israel undertook, and we know how they failed. That is what men are doing—undertaking to have to do with God in prospect of judgment. God dealt with Israel so to prove that they could not do it.

But that is what Christ did in grace. So when He came on earth He was all obedience and love. Christ comes, and what do we find in all His ways? Separation from evil. He kept evil outside of Him in passing through it. He touched the leper and was undefiled. He was love; never did anything but love. He was the living expression of the holiness and love of God in the midst of sin. When that is brought into the conscience, when I see that I have slighted this Christ, and preferred idle vanities to Him, how it shows me what I am. When I see the love of Christ, does not that come and say, 'O you are a wretch to prefer a bit of dress to Christ, to take anything when Christ is disliked for it!' And when thus brought into the light, in the presence of God, we judge ourselves. I judge rightly what I am, and what I have been doing all the while I have been in darkness. I must, of course, see the light; therefore it is by faith. Not that I may realize all, but yet I judge all in God's presence and hate myself.

And it is just when we begin to think that God does not hate us that we begin to hate ourselves. When the spirituality of the law comes, we hate sin, but dread the consequences; but when the light of Christ comes, we hate sin through and through, and there is humbleness. I hate sin, and abhor myself. *Now*, there is a real moral change. I am brought into the true light. O what a difference when a man is brought to God; not in terror which makes him run away, nor in full peace, but yet to a God who, in love, has brought me into His presence to show me what I am. Then, I repeat, it is getting into the light. There is distress at first, but so much the better, for the heart is set right.

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Here is something more than hating sin. We are in the light. God will not enfeeble that light so as to allow one shade of darkness. He loves us so much as not to dim one ray of His glory, but He is doing that which

will make us happy in it. Instead of allowing it, He cleanses it away.

If walking in the light as He is in the light, how do I get there? Not in Christ's life merely, for I get His death. There the light was more shown than in His life. There God is shown to be intolerant of all sin. God Himself has marked there, in the cross, that He cannot tolerate sin. And if Christ was holiness Himself, it shows more clearly the fearfulness of sin put upon Him. If God and Christ are to settle the question of sin between them, they must do it according to the perfection of their own knowledge of it. There light and sin met. Light is turned into judgment against sin. Light did meet the sin, and in judgment. Where are we? To get the fruit of this. Now take love. There He was giving Himself up, all that He was for us. There never was a time in which light and love came out so as on the cross—the perfection of light, because of obedience; of love, because of giving up of self. Never was there

such obedience as when Christ was made sin. All is brought to the same focus, that I may see light and love in Christ. Why all this? That the blood of Jesus Christ His Son may cleanse us from all sin.

Now that I am brought into the light, what do I see? Sin on me? No, I see it was laid on Christ. I see light dealing with sin on Him. When I learn the extent of sin, then I learn the extent of love. When brought into the light as God is,—in the cross—I see that Christ has put my sins away; and my being in the light it is that enables me to see it. When I come to see sin in its fulness, I see that it is on Christ. And now there is not merely the cleansing of my conscience, but peace with God. It is in the light. I am in the light, as God is in the light; and the very thing that brings me to see sin, brings me to see sin put away. I know too that God is love, and here I have peace. Then we get truth in the inward parts. If I confess sin,—own

all sin as such—that is truth in the inward parts. (See Ps. xxxii.) So we are brought in the consciousness of forgiveness into the presence of God; and there I know I am cleansed according to God's mind. Then I learn God's love. In Isaiah the 43rd, God says, "Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." What then? "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake."

Now this is the message that "God is light." He cannot change, you must. The place where this takes place is the cross. The message is God's perfect love. God, in love to your souls, has not waited till judgment to tell you what sin is, but has told it out in Christ as in His sight, and He has done so in putting it away. Hence the fearful guilt of despising such grace.

LAW AND PRIESTLY GRACE.

Read Numbers xvii and xx.

Putting these two chapters together, we see the grace of God in priestly government, to bring His redeemed through the wilderness, and also the contrast between law and priestly grace.

This grace is drawn out by Israel's sin; but grace does not, of course, allow sin. Law could not bring the people into the land. Law must have kept the whole nation out, except Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully. We see its actings in chap. xvi, in the judgment that fell on Korah and his company. If when redeemed we were put under the law, we should be no better off than before. Still, God cannot allow sin. Neither could He give the people up; for had He not redeemed them? as Moses pleaded with Him, (Numb. xiv, 13—16,) "And Moses said unto the Lord, then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might

from among them,) and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. . . . saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness." He cannot give them up; He cannot allow sin; and therefore He brings in priestly grace to meet the difficulty. To take away their murmurings, He does not use the rod of Moses, but that of Aaron. The rod of Moses could only judge them for their sin, and thus take away their murmurings by *judgment*. But Aaron's does it by priestly grace.

God makes it very manifest by whom He will act. Aaron's rod is chosen out of the twelve, and the remarkable sign of its blossoming and yielding fruit, showed that priesthood was connected with life-giving power, as well as with intercession. Both are needed to uphold them and to raise them when failing. "The second Adam was made a quickening spirit." This is the care and authority by which we are led

through the wilderness. God will allow no other, and no other would do. The priesthood of Christ alone can carry us through. It is the rod of authority too; for "Christ is a son over his own house." But we see that unbelief cannot avail itself of this. (xvii, 12, 13.) "And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord, shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?" God had shown them that there was this grace, and they ought to have trusted in it, especially as they had seen the power in Aaron's remaining in among the congregation and staying the plague. They had ground for full assurance; but unbelief prevailed. They were insensible to the value of the priesthood, and their conscience was still under law. For they did not know God, though at the very moment He was acting for them in priestly grace. The circumstances of chap. xx, put them to the test: the outward

power, too, that had brought them out of Egypt was passing away from their minds. Miriam, the expression of it, had died. When apparent power decays, faith is put to the test. Afterwards, Moses passed away too. Unbelief does not get the refreshment that faith does. There is no water. They were in a terrible state of mind—wishing they had shared the judgment that had fallen on their brethren; for there was no confidence in the Lord. Yet they called themselves the congregation of the Lord. They had the pride, but not the comfort of it. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces. There seemed no remedy. But the Lord appeared. He was the only remedy. And He makes Aaron's rod the means of the application of that remedy. It had already been appointed before the occasion for its exercise occurred. There was real need, and God never denies this. He never says it is not real need; but He will have us go to Christ to meet the need. It was not to be Moses's rod; for then it

must be judgment. Nor was the rock to be *smitten* again. That water could be had now, without smiting the rock, was the result of its having been smitten before by the rod of judgment. Everything comes to us through Christ's *having been* on the cross; and we do not need the cross again, but the priestly work. It was now "*Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water.*" Speak the word only, and the water shall flow. All things are ours; we draw nigh now not for acceptance, but to have our need supplied. In verses 9, 10, we see that Moses was vexed and speaks unadvisedly. He could not rise to the height of God's grace; and that was why he could not enter the land. He was in a better mind the first time Israel murmured. Then he said, "it is not against *us* ye murmur, but against the Lord;" now he says, "must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" setting up Aaron and himself, and using the Lord's authority to do it. He *smites* the rock too. There would

really have been more glory to Moses if he had *spoken* instead of smiting; but he did not see this. God called Aaron's rod "*the rod.*" The other was set aside. They were never under that rod again. It is Christ for us, or nothing. Any other principle must have dealt with them as with Korah. It is only a *word* now, and every blessing flows. To smite the rock again would be the same as saying, because we fail, Christ must die again. It is denying grace to say that anything is needed now except intercession. To "sanctify him" would be to give Him credit for all that He is, as He has revealed Himself. To "sanctify him in our hearts" is to attach to Him all that He is. But Moses did not do this. He did not count upon God's grace, which was all that was needed. But does God stop His grace because of this? Does He stop the outflowing of the water to quench their thirst? No, He does not. If Moses failed to sanctify Him before the people, He will only the

more sanctify *Himself* before them. He comes in *Himself* when the one who should act fails. Just as when the disciples who ought to have been able to cast the evil spirit out of the child failed in doing so, Jesus, coming down from the mount of transfiguration, said, "bring him to me." It was wrong that they could not cast him out, but His own personal interference was gained through it. He gives the people the water they need in spite of Moses's unbelief and their murmuring. *He* will act according to the rod of His appointing, if *Moses* does not. Christ never fails in carrying on that which as Priest He has undertaken. Israel should have walked under the power and comfort of that rod. They saw the blossoms and the fruit, and should have counted on it. If there is anything we want, and we doubt of getting it, because we say we do not deserve it, that is putting ourselves under the law. It is forgetting that there is "the rod;" and that it is "speak the word only." God takes away the murmur-

ings by grace. He deals with all our evil, as His children, in grace. Look at Peter's case. Was it because he repented that Jesus prayed for him that his faith should not fail? We know it was not. And was it because Peter wept that the Lord turned and looked upon him? It was afterwards that he wept. When we do wrong, priestly grace acts for us, and obtains for us grace, to see, and confess, and put it away. Christ probes the heart of Peter, but does not leave him in the evil. This is the privilege of His children. Grace gives the gospel to the world. Grace gives priesthood to the Church. It all originates in God. If I sin, it is not I who go to the Priest, but He goes to God for me. It is not said, "if a man *repents*, but if he *sins*, we have an advocate with the Father." When, through the action of priestly grace, a sense of my sin is given me, I go to God for strength against it. It is He who obtains that for me which brings me back to God. All this is the fruit of

His unsolicited grace. It was God who appointed the rod. He is the God of grace in spite of all our evil; and when we see it we are confounded. Carrying us through the wilderness is as much grace as redemption and forgiveness. Even when Israel strove with God, He was "sanctified in them." It is very sad to have "Meribah" (chiding, or strife) written on any part of our history—sad as to us—but He makes it an opportunity for His grace. *They* get just what they want, though Moses is shut out from Canaan. He would make them know the extent of His grace. Another time, grace might act in a different way—in chastening, perhaps, if needed; but this taught them what the character and extent of the grace was. Just the same grace that spoke in Isaiah xliii, 22. "Thou hast been weary of me." I have not wearied thee, but "thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." What language for God to use! yet He goes on: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy trans-

gressions for my own sake." Nothing can make us more ashamed of our unbelief than this astonishing grace. And all because of Christ. Nothing makes us hate sin like this.

GOOD WORKS.

Do not let even the enjoyment of your social meeting, pleasant and profitable as it is, trench upon your actual service among those without, specially the poor. As it is harder and less grateful; so, when done in the Spirit, the Lord especially meets and blesses it. Be much amongst the poor. The Lord always owns it. It was His way; and it has its peculiar importance in more ways than men suppose. It is His order and plan of the Church; for results are not always from apparent causes. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

CHRIST IN THE VESSEL.

“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”—Matt. viii, 23—27.

It is evident that our Lord can never at any time or in any way fail in His dealings towards us. He can never for a moment forget, nor can He fail in power. It is impossible that there can be any failure in His ways or dealings towards us. Hence the smallest degree of fear or distrust is always sin—is always unbelief. Yet we must all be conscious that it does often arise in our hearts. There may indeed be various shades of it; there may be anxiety about ourselves, about our families, about our circumstances; still, we never can be in a position in

which this distrust can be allowed. Sorrow may be very right and very wholesome to our souls—we may be cast down—but the Lord always remains the same. It is well to be cast down sometimes, and to have to say as in the Psalm, “My soul is cast down within me;” but we ought never to be cast down without proving the effect of it to be to cast us upon God for help.

But faith has to be exercised in respect to the character of God’s dealings with us in the path in which He is leading us. I could not, for example, now expect like the Jews, that God would be with me to give me the victory in some violent conflict with a foe, because it is our privilege to suffer quietly. Still I shall learn, that in whatever way I count upon God, He is faithful. People have sometimes quoted the 91st Psalm as a proof we are not to die of pestilence, but this is a mistake. It does not apply to our case—though God may preserve his people amidst every cala-

mity—and we ought to be intelligently walking in His ways. In the path of obedience, in doing the will of the Lord, we may count indeed upon the fulfilment of His promise, “He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” But we must not forget how Satan quoted this promise. He wanted the Lord to do something which God had not bidden Him to do, and used this promise as his warrant to expect the exercise of divine power. But we are only to look for the exercise of God’s power, when we are simply in our proper path as Christians.

When the Lord told His disciples to take nothing for their journey—no purse, nor scrip, nor two coats—it was because He Himself was there, as Emmanuel, in the midst of His people. But when He asked them afterward, “lacked ye anything,” and they replied, “nothing,” He added, “But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy

one." When rejected by Israel's unbelief, He was no longer acting as Emmanuel upon earth, and consequently the position of His disciples was entirely changed, they must now take what they may meet with. For what He was showing in His miracles and acts was, that Emmanuel had come in amongst His people, and that all Satan's power and all man's misery would disappear at once, if man were morally capable of receiving Him in this character. Hence the lepers were cleansed, the hungry were fed, and all that were diseased came to Him and were cured. If they had had faith, the LORD was there on earth; there to bind the strong man, to remove all evil, and to make man happy on earth; but man had not the capacity to receive Him in that character in which He came. The disciples ought plainly to have counted on this power. They ought to have healed the sick and raised the dead and cast out devils. It was when they were proved incapable of using this power, and were com-

plained of for not exercising it by the father of him who had the dumb spirit, and who brought him to Jesus, that He answered, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" They afterwards came to Him apart and asked, "Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, because of *your unbelief.*" They had not faith to use the power. So again, when the multitude were an hungered, and the disciples asked Him, "shall we go and buy bread for them?" and He answered, "*give ye them to eat.*"

They were expected to use the power, and they ought to have used it according to the revelation God had made of Himself. And here is where our faith is to be exercised in walking in subjection to God's word, and to what His word points out, and in this path, counting on the power of Him to sustain us who has set us in it. It is there, most surely, we shall be put to the test. If Israel is to go through the wilderness, they will need faith.

And if Israel is to fight in Canaan, they will need faith. And if Israel has not faith for the wilderness, Israel will fail in Canaan. So here, the disciples ought to have counted on Emmanuel's power. If He is in the boat with them, they are not going to perish in the storm. But their unbelief is shown in their distrust. They *awoke Jesus*, and said, "Lord, save us, we perish." And if this showed their earnestness, it showed too their unbelief—and is too accurate a picture of ourselves.

We are in the same boat with Jesus, and in whatever shape the trouble comes, we are called to have faith in Him. The trial of our faith comes in the path we are in, and not in some other. Christ has perfect love to the Church,—He loves it and cherishes it—and we are to count on Him for a constant supply of grace to our souls, that we may overcome every trial. He calls us to live as saints on the earth, to walk as He walked, and to continue to the end; and, just as the

disciples in the boat, we ought to count on His power and help to overcome every evil, let what storm there may arise.

I have said that the Lord is not exercising His power in the way of temporal deliverances now—that is not what characterizes the present exercise of His power. If therefore I am looking for temporal deliverance, I may be looking for that which He never meant to give. The Church is to be in a state of weakness in the eyes of the world, and to be sustained in that weakness by an unseen power. “Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.” (Col. i, 2.) The more we get to be companions with Jesus, the more will He defend us against everything evil, and keep our souls in a quiet, lowly, and humble place. Let us be once in that place of quiet and obedient service, and then we may always reckon on the Lord for help. There is a ground in the relationship in which we are set to God,

which secures to us all that His almighty presence can give. "Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith *the Lord Almighty.*" I have been struck with the embodiment of the Old Testament Scriptures in the New, with regard to the way in which God manifested Himself in former dispensations; as the Almighty to Abraham, as Jehovah to Israel, and the like, and the way in which it is all brought to bear on us in the endearing name of "*Father.*" Now in this relationship of "Father," you may count on all things—not indeed simply as "the Almighty" and "Jehovah"—but that as "*Father.*" He will use all His power as Almighty, and Jehovah too, in your behalf. I, who *was* the Almighty, and *am* Almighty, am your Father. Therefore it is not our place to come to Him with fear, but to count, as walking with Him, as a Father, on all

that He is. "Holy Father," said the Lord Jesus, "keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." We are "holy brethren," as having a holy Father. "And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." May we desire to be in the place where God has set us, and being once there, to count on all the tender grace and love we want in the way, and to reckon on His faithful goodness.

THE FIRMNESS OF LOVE IN DISCIPLINE.

Numbers xxvii, 12—23.

There is a firmness in real, perfect love which an easy, amiable nature is able neither to appreciate nor exercise. We see it in the Lord Jesus. He maintained His discipline or education of His disciples, (of Peter for instance,) and did not relax, as one who sacrificed

their *blessing to present gratification*. And we see this firmness of love in the Lord of Moses at the opening of this scene.

The Lord has Moses under discipline, and He will not abate the discipline. Moses had forfeited the land, and the Lord will not let him enter the land. In this He is peremptory. We see it further in Deut. iii, 24—29. “I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and

behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan." If saints incur chastening, they must go through chastening, Jacob is a wanderer at Bethel, and the Lord does not send him home again, but lets discipline take its course, so that Jacob shall wander still further. It is not the way of divine love, which is perfect love, to slacken the hand in such cases. The style of the Lord here is peremptory. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin." (ver. 12—14.)

Moses then spake, and the excellent character of his words seems to be in this, that in a moment like the present,

when he had been humbled and rebuked, and nature might have behaved itself sullenly, or at least been silent and reserved, Moses is all anxiety about the sheep of Israel. For Moses, as I may say, was no hireling, "whose own the sheep are not." He loved them as his own. He had an individual, personal interest in the flock. He loved them and their blessing, and could not bear the thought of their being left in the wilderness without a shepherd. Let another take his office. In meekness he will bear that, and rejoice in it—only let the flock be led and fed. Like himself on an earlier occasion, (see chap. xi,) His honour may be put on the Seventy, but Moses could say, "would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." Let him be displaced, so that Israel be fed. "And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in

before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd." (ver. 15—17.)

This is very lovely workmanship of the Spirit in the servant of the Lord. This earnest care for the people, and this meek forgetfulness of himself, may rebuke our hearts. Moses does not resent the disadvantage into which he was put by the hand of the Lord; he is quiet under that, so that others be blest. "For we are glad, when we are weak; and ye are strong," said another like him.

The Lord then replies:—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before

Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord : at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation ;” and perhaps more excellent than all are these words of the Lord.

He puts the matter at once into the hand of His servant. He commissions Moses to ordain his own successor, to lay his hand on Joshua. And He will have this done in a way to honour Moses—it shall be before the priest and in the sight of the congregation. And then, Moses shall instruct Joshua, give him a charge before the people, and constitute him (though not fully yet in measure) the head of Israel, as he had been, that Israel might be obedient.

This is very blessed. While the Lord, as we saw, will not relax the discipline under which Moses had brought himself, or alter the word which had gone out of His lips merely to gratify His servant, yet He will let all the people know, and Moses himself know,

how He loved His disciplined servant, what a chosen vessel He esteemed him, and what an honoured man he would make him. Moses shall have the honour of ordaining Joshua, of endowing Joshua, of instructing Joshua, and of putting some of his own honour upon Joshua. But still more. He *answers his wishes* to the full, as well as *honours* him. Moses had desired a shepherd for the sheep, one that would lead them out and bring them in; and the Lord now undertakes that Joshua shall be all this and do all this in the presence and in the behalf of Israel.

All this is very lovely in the faithful, unchanging love of God. The Lord would not slacken the hand or the word that was chastening His servant, but His heart is as near His servant as ever, and His purpose both to honour him and to make him happy, just as perfect and fresh as ever. It reminds me of Jesus and Peter. "I have prayed for thee," says the Lord Jesus to Peter, "that thy faith fail not, and

when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke xxii.) Was not that putting new honour upon a chastened, humbled Peter? As before, in the time of Matt. xvi, xvii, it was a *rebuked* Peter that was taken up to *the mount of glory*.

What a tale of divine, perfect love all these things tell us! Rebuked Peter is taken up the hill; humbled, chastened Peter is commissioned to strengthen his brethren; Moses, who had lost Canaan, is to ordain, endow, instruct, and dignify his successor—to strengthen, more than strengthen, his brother!

This is the way of perfect, divine love. It is *firm*, but it is *unchanging* in its favour and its objects—a mere easy, amiable nature, again I say, can neither appreciate or imitate it. Moses does as the Lord commands; (ver. 22, 23;) but that of course. It was his own joy and praise to do so.

This scripture gives us a beautiful sample of communion between the Lord and one of His servants.

THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST FOR FULNESS OF JOY.

1 John i.

In Christ we have that which is perfect from God's own hand and heart; and what can we need more? and this is now in us by the Holy Ghost.

The poor thief on the cross, when taught of God, knew all about Christ as if he had witnessed Christ's whole life. It was what his heart needed, and what God revealed.

In the first verse of this chapter, we see the closest intimacy, but not leading to familiarity; for it shows us Christ's glory, and that produces adoration. The Holy Ghost is always ready to teach us about Christ; but it is astonishing what barrenness we bring into our hearts by admitting things which are not of God, and so grieving the Spirit, and hindering His teaching, and therefore our own joy, by having Christ manifested to us. They may not be sinful things that we admit into our hearts, but things all around us; things which are not our proper occupation.

The proper occupations of life are no hindrances to our joy, nor any bar to our devotedness. Was not Christ a carpenter? Did not the apostle Paul show his devotedness in labouring night and day at his tent-making? Christ is for our joy in communion, as He is also our manna for daily strength; and we should learn in the common things of life His power and care, as Israel, by going through the wilderness, learnt that God cared for their *raiment*, and their feet not *swelling*. But we should seek to walk unspotted, so that when there is a moment for joy alone with Him, we may be ready at once, and not have to retrace our steps and regain lost ground.

Fellowship is first presented, that our joy may be full. Then the nature of Him with whom we have fellowship. Relationship first, and then the nature made known. There may be attraction to Christ, but there can be no fellowship until full forgiveness is known—known on the ground of Christ's having done such a work that God

cannot impute sin to a believer. In Heb. ix. 27, we see the common lot of all that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." But death and judgment are over in Christ for me. If one spot of sin is left on me, there can be no communion. If I think, on going into His presence, the first thing He will see is a spot—and if there is a spot, the perfect light must show it—I shall be afraid to go in. No spot *can* be allowed now; for God is not now behind a veil, which was the reason why Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, could allow what cannot be allowed now.

Three things are true of our condition: we are in His presence without a veil; we have fellowship, and we are clean, or there could be no communion. Where God has seen the blood He can never see sin, unless the blood could lose its value. But if I sin I am darkness, (for I am what my thoughts are,) and there can be no communion until my heart sees the sin where God sees it—on the cross.

If for one moment I do not watch the flesh, it will get into mischief, for Satan watches his opportunity. I have always an enemy to watch, but I need not get a bad conscience, for God is always able to keep me from falling. Having the Spirit of God to dwell in me, it is *worth while* not to grieve Him. Worldly thoughts show the state of the soul, that it is not filled with the Spirit, or there would be no room for them. We may be occupied with our daily work, and do our very best in it, in communion. If Christ were here, and you had to black his shoes, your heart would be full of Him while doing it; and I need not say that you would do your very best to give them a polish. Do everything for the saints in this spirit, as doing it for Him; for communion, whether with Him or with each other, can only be in the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore there is no communion when you grieve Him.

“Fellowship one with another,” in verse 7, is the communion of saints. To say that “we have *no sin*,” in our

nature (verse 8) would prove us to be no Christians at all, as much as if we said "we have *not sinned*." But we ought not to sin. It is inexcusable failure, for He has promised that we shall not be tempted above our power; and this is true of the weakest as well as the strongest. So that there is no excuse for any, even if ever so weak; for He always provides a way of escape.

People plead sudden temptation—and it may be true that the temptation is sudden—but the unmortified heart, that causes the temptation to have power, is not sudden.

We must look to the cause. Rain may come in at the roof of the house, but show itself lower down, and we must look to how it came in. Christ dealt with the *root* of Peter's sin. He did not reproach him with his denial, but with his boasting self-confidence. The constitution of the ashes of the "red heifer" (in Numbers xix) shows God's holy jealousy about sin. The man who touched but a dead *bone* could not be restored to communion till he

(in type) had a sense of the heinousness of that sin, in the judgment poured upon Christ for it. Christ has been consumed by the wrath of God for my sin, even if that sin were but the result of carelessness. Still the very "*ashes*" prove that the sin is put away—that it is all burnt up—that it no longer exists. The sin was put upon the victim, "made sin for us," so that even the ashes made him that touched them unclean.

THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF FAITH.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."—Heb. xii, 1, 2.

There is nothing that our hearts need more to be brought up to, than

the practical exercise of faith. It is essential to enable the saint to take his proper path and course through the world; and nothing in the way of light or instruction can ever supply its lack.

The measure of my faith will determine the measure of my devotedness and the acceptance of my service, whatever may be my path, as to outward circumstances through the world. "Without *faith* it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The dispensations of God may change, and the light of divine revelation may vary as to degrees of clearness, but faith is the essential characteristic of those who are owned of God in every age.

All those witnesses that are spoken of in the eleventh chapter of this epistle, are presented to us as examples of the practical power of faith, and are spoken of for our encouragement in the same path; and the Lord Jesus is also introduced to us in the beginning

of the twelfth chapter for the same end. For the particular aspect in which faith is presented to us here is, that it allies with God in a knowledge of His ways, and in obedience to His will; and that in a world of evil, which has its course in separation from God and in opposition to His ways.

But there is a difference between Jesus and these witnesses, and therefore the apostle singles Him out from them all, and says, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus.*" I may see Abraham, who by faith left his home and kindred, and sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country: or Isaac, who by faith blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come: or the wrestler Jacob, who would not let the angel go until he had blessed him: or Moses, who by faith turned away from Pharaoh's court and all its ease and honours, to share in the reproach of the people of God: these all, and more than can be enumerated, have run their race before, and they are set

for our encouragement; but in Jesus we have a far higher witness. They, in particular instances and in trying circumstances, are shown in the exercise of that faith which sets the will of God above the love of ease, or the world, or life itself. But in the Lord Jesus, we have a witness, that in the midst of the rejection of every claim to that which was His right, and in the face of Satan's malice and seductive power, and the unmitigated hatred of the world, pursued His course even to the end without one faltering step.

But there is more than this in this blessed witness. In Him there is the needed grace to sustain us in our race; and in "looking unto Jesus," we get a motive and an unfailing source of strength. We see in Him the love which led Him to take this place for us—"who when He putteth forth his own sheep goeth before them." For if a race is to be run, we need a fore-runner in the course; and in Jesus we have one who did run before us, and has become "the author and finisher of

our faith," so that in looking to Him we draw fresh and unfailing strength into our souls. But while Abraham and all the rest filled up their little measure in their several places, Jesus has filled up the whole course of faith; so that there is no position I can possibly be in, no trial that I can be called to endure, but Christ has passed through it all before me and overcome." Thus I have got one who presents Himself to my soul in such a character as to know what grace I constantly need, and who will as certainly supply it. For having Himself overcome, He says to me, "be of good cheer, I have overcome." He does not say, "you shall overcome," but "I have overcome." Hence, we learn that however rough the storm may be, it only throws us the more thoroughly upon Christ; and so that which would have been only a sore trial to the flesh, serves but to chase us nearer to Christ.

Whatever, therefore, attracts our eye off Christ is but a "*weight*" and a hindrance to our running with patience

the race that is set before us. When Christ has become the one object of our souls, we shall feel that whatever averts the eye but for a moment from Him is a weight and a hindrance in our Christian course, and must be got rid of. If we were to find a home in this world, instead of being strangers and pilgrims in it, nothing would be more proper than to gather around us the things of nature, in order to make ourselves a *comfortable* home. But if we are to be *the followers* of Christ, and to be running a race, the whole aspect of things will be changed. If I am running a race, for example, a cloak will not do; I must get rid of it. It is all very well at proper times, but now it is simply a weight, and I must get rid of it. It will hinder me in running, and entangle my feet, and that is just what I do not want; I must therefore throw it aside. It would seem strange in other circumstances to see a man throw away a comfortable cloak; but if he is running a race, it would be as strange to see him wrap it

round him. Every bystander would tell him his cloak would hinder him, and make him lose the race.

Here it is that the effect of the Lord Jesus being thus presented to us is so encouraging. For whatever encouragement we may find in the history of the witnesses of the 11th chapter, it is only in the Lord Jesus that we find a source of *strength*. Hence our eye must be turned off from every other witness, and be alone fixed on Jesus, the true and faithful witness ; and it is beyond all price to be able thus, at all times, to look to Him ; it is above all price to know that there is not a trial nor a difficulty that I can pass through, that He has not passed through before me, and found the grace of the Father sufficient ; and that He will, in looking to Him, not fail to supply all needed grace to my heart and conscience.

There were two ruling features that marked Christ's life down here : the exercise of constant dependence on the Father ; and the undividedness of his

affections. "I live (says Christ) by the Father;" and "that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment even so I do." The new man is always the dependent man; and the moment we get out of the spirit of dependence, we get into the flesh. When Christ was down here, He was the object of heaven; and hence the voice which said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;" and thus the divine person of the Lord is always being witnessed to, that He may become the object of our hearts. Christ, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame;" and this in dependence on the Father: and it is a comfort in running the race to know that we have all that He has accomplished, and all that he is as our resource.

APHORISMS.

We must not put the Holy Spirit in the place of Scripture; but we must remember that it is the Spirit, through the scripture, that gives us the knowledge of God's mind.

It is God's faithfulness that gives His mind where two or three are gathered together; or if it be individual, it is, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

It matters not in what form I get the mind of the Lord; I am not to ask as to the form: "we have the mind of Christ." But there is need of a lowly state of soul.

I do not admit the principle that there is commandment in anything, as merely ordained, in the New Testament. Everything is binding upon me that is there; but then it is on the principle that the Holy Ghost bows my will to the mind of God.

I do not look at the Lord's table as

a matter of command: it is a blessed privilege thus to remember Christ, and love makes me obedient to His will. I do not pray because I am commanded, though there may be a command. If people pray only because they are commanded, it is poor work.

It is an important thing to remember that when God's glory is concerned, one must act without a command. Moses did so when he took the tabernacle outside the camp, because Israel had set up the calf within. But one may have gathered the mind of God from His word.

THE SAVIOUR-GOD.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—Heb. xiii, 8.

Awake, my soul, to praise,
Thou hast a rapturous theme!
A subject, glorious and divine;
'Tis Christ—sing thou of him.
Come, and before his face,
Low bow, with foot unshod;
And with a thankful, happy heart,
Adore thy Saviour-God.

Down to this earth he came,
 And loved, and wept, and died ;
 "Glory to God, goodwill to man !"
 His advent angels cried.
 Divine, yet clothed in flesh,
 His own-made earth he trod.
 He came to do the Father's will—
 To be the Saviour-God.

That will accomplish'd, now
 He sits in heaven above,
 The Church's representative,—
 Dear object of his love.
 He bears the glory *there*,
 As *here* he bore the rod ;
 He died—yet lives for evermore,
 Victorious Saviour-God !

And soon He'll come again,
 To take His church to heaven ;
 That church, redeemed by precious blood,—
 By grace alone forgiven.
 How loud her song will be !
 How sweetly will she laud,
 Through one eternal, blissful day,—
 Jesus, her Saviour-God.

ROMANS X, XI.

In the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of this epistle, the Spirit of God, through the apostle, is reconciling the faithfulness of God, in respect of the promises to the Jews, with the general truth of the epistle, viz., that the grace of God was without respect of persons, all being sinners equally by nature; and so there being one, single, blessed righteousness suited for all. But, in doing this, there was a difficulty which had to be met. To Israel, as such, the promises were made. To Abraham, promises — unconditional promises — not merely conditional ones — had been given. How was God to reconcile the absolute promises to the Jews, with making nothing of the Jews, but treating them as sinners of the Gentiles? This difficulty is solved by seeing how the apostle, in the 9th chapter, forced up the Jews to acknowledge that if they took the promises on the ground of descent, they must let in *Ishmael*, who was as much the son of Abraham

as Isaac was; and the *Edomites* also, who were the descendents of Jacob's *eldest* son, but were the abhorrence of the Jews; (ver. 6—13;) and secondly, if they took them on the ground of obedience, they had most clearly forfeited all at Sinai, when the golden calf was set up, and God had to retreat into His sovereignty, in order to be able to spare them. (Ver. 14—18.) So that if they do not accept these promises on the ground of sovereign grace they are lost. And if it is by grace, God will show Himself sovereign, by letting the Gentiles in. (Ver. 19—26.) Then he shows, thirdly, that they had stumbled at the stumbling stone. (Ver. 27—33.)

Now, in chapters x and xi, he goes on to show that God has not forgotten His promises; but that He will fulfil them in the latter days, by bringing Israel in, in the complete acknowledgment of entire dependence on Him, just as Gentiles, when they have no right by promise, or anything else.

Chapter x. In the first verse, the

apostle expresses his affection for Israel. Then he says all he can for them. "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." The thing he had been setting forth throughout the epistle was the righteousness of faith. As regards righteousness, they had not only failed in establishing their own, but had gone on persevering in making a righteousness of what they had failed in; and when God sent *His* righteousness in the person of His Son, Him they rejected; thus seeking to establish their own righteousness, while refusing God's. In the 5th verse the apostle goes on to say, that the righteousness of the law had not accomplished what man desired; and then in the sixth verse, the righteousness of faith comes in, and it "speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring

Christ down from above :) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Here in resurrection, we get the great principle of righteousness by faith, which they had rejected. Israel, as a nation, had utterly failed, as regards their own righteousness; for they had broken the very highest and nearest link between themselves and God, when they had made the molten calf, and worshipped it. From that very moment nothing was left for them in the way of blessing, but this righteousness by faith, of which Moses had spoken to them, as we see in Deut. xxx.

In the 27th chapter of Deut. we see that Moses, in God's name, had been laying down the great principle of legal righteousness to the Jews, as the

keepers of the law; and which if they continued not in, cursing must be the result. And mark here that the curses were pronounced on mount Ebal, the mount of cursing. The blessings were never pronounced, nor indeed could they be, for God Himself stood in the way; because those who were under the law had not kept it, and were necessarily under its curse. The real effect of being under law is curse. Where is the blessing? Nowhere to be found. Now this, that the curse is on Ebal, is our security; for Christ has borne it, having been made a curse for us; and we are beyond it. So it can never reach us, for "Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. In the 28th chapter, we get the government of God in the midst of Israel, which put them dependent on present conduct. "If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all

nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." (Ver. 1, 2.) "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee." Then in the 30th chapter he supposes all this to have had its result. They had been brought under the government of the law in the land, and all had failed. They had fallen under the law's curse. In the twenty-eighth verse of the 29th chapter, they are rooted out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, the effect of their failure; and in the 29th verse we get the summing up of the whole, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children, that we may do all the words of this law."

The things that were revealed were

those that they were to act upon. They had been put into the land on the ground of obedience, to *do* "all the words of this law." This ended in utter rejection, in their being rooted out of their land. There is your rule to act on.

But behind all this, there was another thing—a secret thing in the heart of God—and that was grace. "And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee." (Deut. xxx, 1.) Here I get quite another thing. All the effect of God's government had had its accomplishment. The things which were revealed for them to act on are no longer owned, and another class of blessings are now brought out. All that had depended on their conduct was lost; but behind it all there was this secret thing,—God's thoughts of grace. Therefore in the 30th chapter, we have

the righteousness by faith brought out. For if, when out of their own land, they shall turn to the Lord their God, He will have compassion on them, and turn their captivity, and gather them from the nations whither He had scattered them. Thus every question of legal righteousness is utterly at an end. If there is any hope for a Jew, it is on another principle—even through the righteousness of faith. Now the moment you bring in the righteousness of faith, Christ is the end of it. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Legal righteousness is done with, and Israel has suffered its curse; and now Paul shows that they are here thrown on this new way of having to do with God—on the righteousness of Christ.

"The word is nigh thee." You have *not to go to Jerusalem to get it, or over the sea, for "the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,*

and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Chap. x, 9.) The moment you take the law in that spiritual sense, you get Christ. He confirms it by that other scripture, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." And the moment God brings in the Jew on this ground, He brings in the Gentile also. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Chap. x, 12, 13.) Well, then, if it is "whosoever," there can be no longer any difference between Jew and Gentile.

Mark here the lovely, beautiful, connexion with the beginning of this epistle. In the beginning of the epistle he had reduced man to one common level—even to utter equality in sin: "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Now he brings all up to the higher level of God's saving grace, which can take up and bless a

Gentile. And there being now no difference between Jew and Gentile, neither is there any difference in God; "For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." This "whosoever" again! Wonderful is the power of God in saying these words, letting out as they do the fulness of blessing in His heart to poor sinners!

But "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Now he takes another ground, in which, in exceeding grace, he seeks to provoke them to jealousy. That which shut up the Jews was not merely the rejection of Christ, but the rejection of the Gentiles as His body, refusing grace to the Gentiles. And in the parable of the king who took account of His servants, Matt. xviii, 23—35, do we not see just this—the Jew refusing mercy to the Gentile? "O

thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" As Paul says in 1 Thess. ii, 16, "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved to fill up their sins alway." Christ came carrying all the promises, and they rejected Him. Not merely had they failed in the question of righteousness—that they had done before—now they reject the Messiah. Well, now, Christ on the cross prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That prayer of Christ's was heard as regards God: and so Peter said: "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers," but repent and He will come back again. But before he could finish that sermon the priests came upon him and stopped him: and thus they not only rejected Jesus Christ Himself, but the testimony of the Holy Ghost as to His second coming. And this is what Stephen charged

them with: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye;" and then instead of Christ coming back to them on the earth, Stephen goes up to Christ in heaven.

If you take Christ on earth as man—though "God, blessed for ever"—the moment He takes His place as man among men, the Holy Ghost comes and seals Him. The Holy Ghost comes and testifies of that which is on the earth. When He is speaking to Nathanael it is another thing: "Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Here it is the Son of man, and angels His servants. In the former case, heaven opened, and the Holy Ghost came down to seal Jesus as the Son of God. In this case, heaven opened and the Son of man is seen here on the earth as the object of all the angels' service. But in the case of Stephen, heaven opened, and the Son of man is seen there. It is not heaven opening to put its seal and stamp on the Son

of man here, but to show us the Son of man there. It is not now the heaven opened to look on what is here, but the heaven opened for the Church to look up at what is there. This is the Church's position now; full of the Holy Ghost to be gazing up into heaven, and having communion with Christ at God's right hand.

This testimony of the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of Stephen, the Jews stopped, casting Stephen out of the city and stoning him, thus bringing final rejection on themselves. Their rejection of grace to the Gentiles we see constantly manifested all through the Acts of the Apostles: see especially chap. xxii, 21, 22. There Paul is giving an account of his conversion; and when he came to this part of it, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles," we read, "They gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live." Thus Paul was the minister of

grace, but they would not hear of grace, "filling up their sin alway, for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

This same spirit was manifested in Saul of Tarsus; for where do we first find him? Holding the garments of the men who stoned Stephen, when heaven was opened, showing Christ to the Church and closing grace to the Jew. Then he was stopped on his way to Damascus, and the glory of the Lord was revealed to him. And what did he then see? The unity of the Church. Not merely the Son of man in glory; but in the glory he saw the Lord putting all the saints in union with Himself. Thus the great thing revealed to Paul was this, that the very saints whom he was persecuting were one with this Lord in glory. He was converted by knowing that the saints and the Lord were one. For the Lord owned the persecuted saints as Himself; therefore in persecuting them he was persecuting Him.

Full of this gospel, Paul sets about

building the Church. He goes about telling this glorious truth, that believers are one spirit with Jesus; the Church one body in Him, their glorified Head in heaven. This blessed testimony of the union of the saints with the Lord in glory, against which there has ever been war, was thus brought out by Paul. Now, also, the testimony which Isaiah, seven centuries before, had pronounced, found Israel, in Acts, with hearts fat until there was no remedy.

In this 10th of Romans, Paul shows that the gospel did go out unto the ends of the earth, and that Israel ought to have received it. But he touches the subject very gently, saying, "They have not all obeyed the gospel." For their own prophet Isaiah said, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." It is no use getting on legal ground here; legal righteousness is not *believing a report*. Isaiah says they have not believed what they did hear. "But have they not

heard? Yes, verily; their sound went into all the earth." Thus creation itself was showing that God's eye was on the Gentiles. God did think of the Gentiles. "First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you." But you will not allow the Gentiles to be brought in. Well, that is the way your own prophets foretold it. But Esaias is very bold and saith, "I was found of them that sought me not." But to Israel he saith, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Thus he deals exceedingly gently with them, saying in effect, "I was made manifest to those that asked not after me," and he says it in the words of Isaiah; but he adds, here is your character—"a disobedient and gainsaying people."

Chap. xi. "I say then, Hath God cast away His people?" Am I really saying that they are all cast off and done with? "God forbid, for I also am an Israelite." How could I say

so, when I am one of you? He brings back their hearts by throwing Himself in amongst them.”

You will find in this chapter these three proofs that God has not cast away His people. First, that there was then a remnant according to the election of grace. Second, that if God was provoking them to jealousy, it was not to cast them off, but to bring them in. Third, the ultimate promise of God to bring them back as a people through Christ: “And so all Israel shall be saved.”

We must remember that he is here speaking of “Israel” as a people, not as the elect remnant; for he uses that only to prove that God had not cast off His people. It is, moreover, clear—as we shall see—that it cannot mean the Church of God; for how can we speak of casting off that which is one with Christ in heaven.

God had from the beginning an elect remnant which He would not cut off. “God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Wot ye not what

the scripture saith of Elias?" He takes the case of Elias. A remarkable case, for Elias comes with judgment to bring back Israel; but he says it is useless, and "he makes intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." I do not say Elias was right, for he did not understand God's grace. "But what saith the answer of God unto him?" You do not know my grace; for "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Elijah had not faith to see these seven thousand. The inward life of Elijah's soul was not at that moment up to his outward testimony. He was full of himself—"I, even I;"—and therefore could not look at Israel as God viewed them. Now look at Elijah. The altar of the Lord had been built up; and just after he says, "Lord, they have digged down thine altars." The prophets of Baal had all been slain, and just after he says, "They have slain

thy prophets." The personal measure of his faith was not equal to his outward testimony.

And here I would add that in no case should our outward testimony outstrip the measure of our communion with God. The effect of public testimony is sure to bring us into great danger if the inward life is not equal to it. Sometimes the outward testimony is allowed to go on long after the inward life has ceased to act. So it was in the case of Elijah. His inward life was not keeping pace with his testimony at the moment that he called down fire from heaven—though it was by the power of God, as we know—and slew the prophets of Baal. For just after all this manifested power of God, a woman threatens him, and he breaks down. Ah! he says, it is all useless; and away he flies for his life. Blessed man he was, but here weak.

Now God is above all Elijah's thoughts. For if Elijah has not spiritual discernment to discover God's elect, God has. If such a man as

Elijah fails and pleads *against* Israel, God, in His grace, will plead *for* them. Therefore this is a proof of His not giving them up.

From the 7th to the 10th verses Paul notes these terrible sentences from their own prophets: "God hath given them the spirit of slumber," &c.; and "Let their table be made a trap," &c. Then in the 11th verse he asks, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy." So in the 14th verse: "If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh." This cannot be the Church; for who would talk of provoking to emulation the flesh of the Church? The Church is not "in the flesh," but "in the Spirit." Still the *flesh is in the believer, and through carelessness may be allowed.* Verse 15: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" This, again, cannot

apply to the Church; for how can you talk of the casting away and receiving again of those who are perfected for ever in Christ Jesus. It is of Israel, after the flesh, he is speaking; and the reception of Israel hereafter will be the new birth of the world.

In what follows we must keep in mind the difference between God's dealings with a series of promises in the earth, and the election of the Church. He is looking at the way God works in accomplishing His promises down here, and not at the unity of the Church up yonder. Verse 17, "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree," &c. This olive tree shows the Jewish nation, and cannot mean, in any sense, the Church of God: and the Spirit, in using the figure of a tree has proved that it is for the earth, and not for heaven. And then as to some of the branches being broken off, that could not be if it were a question of the Church and salvation. But it cannot mean the Church, for how could it

be said of the Church, "which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ," that it could have its branches broken off? Verse 19, "Thou wilt say, then, the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." This is not the Church of God; for we are not grafted in among the Jews, but "one new man," as we see in Eph. ii. Those who are grafted in are the Gentiles, put in the place of testimony.

There are three things connected with Abraham: first, election; second, the call of God; and third, the promise of God. Noah had governmental power in the earth given to him. Idolatry comes in, as we see from Joshua xxiv, 2; and then all the power that acted on their fears or awakened their gratitude, was attributed to Satan,— "They sacrificed unto devils, and not to God." Every idea of God was either one of terror, or something to gratify their passions. On that God calls out one to be a witness for Him in the earth. Abraham was called out to be separate from this surrounding idolatry.

“The Lord had said to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house.” And again, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, of old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and they served other gods, and I took Abraham your father,” &c. Well, then, as we see, when this state of things came in, God calls Abraham out in separation from it all, and gives him promises, and thus planted the olive tree in the earth. Well, because of unbelief some of the branches were broken off; but mark, he does not root out the tree; He only breaks some of the branches off. “And thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;” that is, the Gentiles were grafted in upon the stock of promise. The Gentiles in their time will be broken off, if they continue not in His goodness. And the Jews, the natural branches, “if they abide not in unbelief, shall be

grafted in again" to their own stock of promise, for God is able to graff them in again. He would never speak of "grafting in again," as to personal salvation. Now all these, God's dealings with this root of promise, are quite a different thing from this new and blessed thing that believers are now members of the body of Christ in heaven. There is no breaking off there; no grafting in again there. The natural branches are the Jews. He is taking the dispensations of God, and looked at as a dispensation, Gentiles are put under the same responsibility as the Jews were. Now the Gentile system is the order of the promises. A Jew must now enter into the circumstances of Gentiles. And what he says to the Gentiles is, you will be treated exactly as the Jews were, if you fail. It is not a question of individual salvation; it is not a question of the union of the Church with Christ—that should be no question. What he says is this, that the testimony that is ordered of God on the earth will be

set aside if there is failure. And in verse 24 he adds, "how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree." Now, it is perfect nonsense, as well as ignorance, to say that the Church, whose "life is hid with Christ in God," can be grafted into "their own olive tree." It is not a question of the soul at all, but of the ordering of things on the earth. When I get the dealings of God with a people on the earth, then it is "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: and so all Israel shall be saved,"—that is, when the Church of God is completed and removed,—then all Israel—not individually, but as a whole—will be saved. Not brought into the Church, for that will have been removed, but saved as a nation on the earth. *Now* a Jew comes in as a Gentile, and takes his place "where there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus."

“For I would not that you should be ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer,” &c. I do not doubt that the professing Church has become so. The apostle is writing thirty years *after* the death of Christ, and yet he is saying, “there *shall* come out of Zion the Deliverer,” and he is marking the way of it. The very object of all this is to provoke them to jealousy. He shows the responsibility of Gentiles of continuing in the fatness of the olive tree; and then that the real secret of what God is doing is, that blindness in part has happened unto Israel, until God’s Church is brought in. And then “all Israel shall be saved.” “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” If this is a spiritual Israel, it is non-

sense. They are "beloved for the fathers' sakes." Who? Gentiles? Never; but Israel; for God is the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." "Enemies for your sakes." Is the spiritual Israel that? Never. Nor can believing Jews be said to be so either. "But as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not say that the gifts and calling of God are sovereign. We had that in the ninth chapter. But now he is shewing God's faithfulness. God did call them to be his people, and he will never repent of it.

The very same principle which secures our salvation, is bound up with the fulfilment to Israel of the promises made to the fathers.

I would now say a word on the 30th and 31st verses. The 31st verse is more correctly read thus: "So these, also, have now not believed in your mercy, in order that they, also, may be objects of mercy." In times past you

did not believe; and now they do not believe in your mercy: that is, they will not believe in your gospel. But what is the end of God in that? That they may come in without claim as lost Gentiles. When Jesus came, a Jew might have said, I have a right to this Christ; and therefore Christ said, Do not tell I am the Christ, for I must suffer and be rejected. Till Israel had rejected Christ, they had, through grace, a title to the promises. But now they have lost all title to everything, and thus they will come in under mercy. And that is what makes the apostle cry out, not at the greatness of the mercy, but at the *wisdom* of God, which brings in all under mercy, without claim even to promise. Of course God will fulfil the promises, but fulfil them by bringing them to acknowledge that they had no title to anything.

It is wonderful the way in which the apostle gets through all these things back to God Himself, and so sets the soul adoring His wondrous grace. Be it Jew or be it Gentile, I

look at God. It is not what the saint is who has received the grace, but what the God is who has given it. I can look at God's acts; but I can get beyond the thing given, and look at the God who confers the grace—who elects the sinner. It is not elect Jew or elect Gentile that has any title now; but it is the *sinner* who comes in on the ground of sovereign grace alone. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to whom be glory for ever; Amen."

What a comfort it is, that, while the heart ranges over all his dealings, it can get back to happy fellowship with Himself; and from the centre it can see all round; and when it gets to God, it sees everything in its place. The Lord keep us only there. And when the heart is thus kept in every-day life, through "the truth as it is in Jesus," "putting off the old man and putting on the new," there is a divine capacity to understand God's ways.

In closing, it is of great importance to distinguish between the order of

God's dealings on the earth in maintaining this stock of promise in the earth, first Jewish, then Gentile, and by and by to be Jewish again, (for the natural branches are to be again grafted into their own olive tree,) and the definite union of the Church with Christ in heaven—His bride and His body. I repeat, it is important to distinguish between God's government of the earth, the olive tree of promise, and our own union with the Head in heaven, with whom we get all things, for all things centre in Him.

THE SAMARITAN LEPER.

Luke xvii.

The poor leper in Mat. viii, had that faith which *discovered* Christ. For it is the duty of faith to do this—to make discoveries of the Lord Jesus, veiled as He was under the thick covering of His needed and assumed humiliation.

As he came to Jesus, we are told, "he worshipped Him," and called

Him "Lord." And he appealed to Him as the God of Israel, the one who could heal leprosy—all this telling that this poor leper had faith which discovered the glory of the Son of God.

But it is the business of faith to *use* Jesus as well as to *discover* Him. But in this second duty of faith, this poor man failed. He did not use the glory which he had discovered—at least, not in all that ease and confidence that was worthy of it. "If thou *wilt* thou canst," he says.

And this is a very common condition of the soul. The passage from the discovery to the use of Him, is commonly made with some difficulty. The reserve natural to the conscience of a sinner—the wrong conclusions which the heart of man forms respecting God—the influence of mere human religious thoughts—and the advantages which Satan gains over the soul—account for this. This poor soul was doubtful in using the *grace* of Him whose *glory* his faith had apprehended. "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The

if was attached only to the will or grace of Jesus.

But the Lord sets himself to verify this discovery of Him which faith had already made, and also to encourage that use or enjoyment of Him, which as yet faith was slow to make. He *touch*ed the leper. This was not needed. His word would have been all-sufficient. But He touched the leper; because (son of man as he was, very man as very God) he had God's own distance from all defilement. And then He dealt with him as the Jehovah of Israel, saying, "I will, be thou clean"—thus, not only healing the poor man, but encouraging him, letting him learn, in the simple effectual grace that was visiting him, how in a moment He would put from his heart all the spirit of doubt and of fear that was lingering there.

This case, after this manner, has its own instruction and comfort for us. The other case of the ten lepers, in Luke xvii, is very differently marked.

The appeal of these poor sufferers was little more than the instinctive cry

of misery. As the Lord passed by, they cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They had doubtless heard of Him, and of His doings for poor sufferers like themselves. But they did not know Him by any divinely-wrought apprehension. They called Him only, "Master," and appealed merely to His "mercy." They did not acknowledge His person or His power, like the leper we have already looked at in Matt. viii. Their cry for mercy was only that challenge of felt and conscious misery which appeals to any that pass by. But in answer even to such a call as this, Jesus stands and speaks; as, of old, the Lord God would hear the cry of nature in Hagar. "Go, shew yourselves to the priest," says the Lord, in answer to this cry; and then, as we further read, "as they went, they were healed." He took the place, and did the work, of the Lord God of Israel.

The Samaritan that was among them then becomes distinguished. We read of him thus, "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back,

and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan."

This was quickening. This was salvation. This was more than healed leprosy. "Arise," says Jesus, "go thy way, thy faith hath saved thee." (σέσωκε σε.)

These are our materials in this little significant narrative. Short and simple as they well could be; but they speak of divine secrets to the soul. For we have in this case two beautiful outshinings—an outshining of the personal glory of Christ, and an outshining of the hidden light and power of the Holy Ghost. This may be seen very clearly and surely.

It was both a doctrine and an accepted fact, in Israel, that none could heal a leper but Jehovah—as indeed I have hinted already, and as is well known. No washings of the temple could serve in such a case, no sacrifices could reach it, no priestly interference was even allowed. The healing of a leper must

be accomplished, if at all, while the leper was separated from every one. It was a divine work. The ordinance in Lev. xiii, xiv, which intimates this, tells us, therefore, as I said, that it was a *doctrine* in Israel, that none could heal a leper but Jehovah. And the case of Naaman the Syrian, in 2 Kings v, and the king's surprise and indignation that he had been appealed to, to cleanse a man of his leprosy, shows us that this was likewise an *accepted fact* in Israel.

But here Jesus enters into the separated place. He meets the leper outside the camp, just as, and where, the Lord God of Israel had oftentimes met many a leper. He puts Himself between the leper and the priest, between the defilement and the cleansing—the very place which belonged to Jehovah and to Him only—and in that place He does the work which was Jehovah's and His only. He healed the leper. Ere he and his companions reached the place, their leprosy was gone. And this sealed the title of

Jesus to fill God's place in the midst of His Israel.

Here, then, *the personal glory of Christ* shines out. This was the witness of a light in Jesus which, in its fulness, no man can approach unto. He answers the cry of misery as from the throne of God.

Then, *the hidden work of the Spirit* in the soul of this Samaritan shines out, in its way, just as brightly and fully. He had already been healed. He might have gone on with his companions, to the priest, and done the work, with them, which Moses had commanded. But now he is given faith as well as healing, the faith of God's elect. The hidden power of the Holy Ghost had not, till now, linked his soul with the Christ of God. The word of God, as we have seen, had testified in Israel that healing of a leper was a divine work, that none but God Himself could recover a man of his leprosy. This testimony this poor stranger was now given faith to receive. His soul, by the Spirit, was bound to

the truth, and Jesus, having been his healer, shines before his instructed soul in the glory of the God of Israel. He falls before Him. He is on his face at the feet of Jesus. The mercy he had received was more than human compassion or the help of a fellow-creature. "I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour," sounded in his ears. Jehovah-raphi, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," was before his awakened soul.

And this, as we said, was salvation. This was more than healing. A revelation of Christ had been made to him by the Spirit through the word and through the mercy he had received, and he was a new creature now, as he had been a healed leper before.

This was a fine outshining of the hidden work and light of the Spirit. And the boldness of his faith only brightens this the more. He had been commanded by the Lord to go forward to the priest, and all his companions continue on that road. But he, alone and without further orders, or further delay, turns backward to Jesus.

This was a fine, bold, vigorous action. The Spirit reveals Jesus and presses Him home upon the undivided acceptance of the soul, though law and ordinances may seem to have their claims and stand in the way. And this action of our Samaritan reflects this way of the Spirit. He knows nothing but Jesus. The priest and the temple are behind him. All is gone, now that Jesus is come. In his thoughts, as in the mind of the Spirit, there was One standing there, "greater than the temple." He glorified Jesus as God, and was thankful.

Jesus Himself magnified the law, and served the old temple and priesthood, and therefore He would say to a leper, "Go show thyself to the priest and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them." But as He magnified the law, the Spirit magnifies Him, and so does the faith of the elect.

And boldness of faith like this of the Samaritan, which reached Him through any or every partition-wall,

was ever welcome to Him. If it pressed through a crowd, or broke up the roof of a house, if it waited not for introduction, or refused ceremony, if it acted without ordinances or even, as here, contrary to command, it was only the more welcome. It was His joy to be addressed by a full, unquestioning faith. In the language of the Canticles, we may say, it was then, on such occasions, like the faith of the centurion, or of Bartimeus, or of the friends of the palsied man, or of the Syrophenician, or of the Samaritan sinner at the well, or of the Samaritan leper here, that His soul was set as in a chariot, the chariots of his willing people. (See Cant. vi, 12.)

THE FIRST-BORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN.

Hebrews i.

The way in which the Lord Jesus is spoken of in the opening of this epis-

tle is worthy of special notice ; for it is in His human nature that He is here taken up, (for He was human as well as divine,) and this wreath of glory, composed of so many testimonies to the worth and excellency of His person, is bound upon His brows, as a lowly man. It is not the purpose of the Spirit in this chapter to speak of Him in His godhead—other scriptures abundantly do that—but that which is brought out here is, that all these passages speak about Him as a man down here, while, at the same moment, they show us the wonderful person *behind the man*.

Every Scripture has its appropriate subject ; and our advancement in divine wisdom hangs on our discernment, by the Holy Spirit, of its distinct and various import. This portion, then, was not written to tell us about God, or that “the WORD was God,” but to tell us that JESUS IS GOD ; and that He, who once walked up and down on our earth, and breathed our air, and conversed with men, eating and drink-

ing with them, and sympathizing with them in all their sorrows, and who wept at the grave of Lazarus and over the city of Jerusalem, was the very same *glorious One*.

Now there is an immense difference between the knowledge of this truth and a mere orthodox reception of the doctrine of the Trinity. Men may have this, and boast in it, and yet have no right apprehension of Jesus *as God*; and may even be seeking for other means than His precious blood to bring them to God, and for other mediators than Christ between their souls and God. Being at a distance from God, they naturally and necessarily are looking for something that is nearer to God than themselves. Hence it is that a mere doctrinal knowledge of the Trinity never draws out the affections of the soul; for it is that which most *adapts itself to us that we most love*. The person that my heart will be most knit to is the one to whom I can go in all my sufferings, and all my sorrows, and who can get from God all I want.

But where shall I find this object of my affections—this supplier of my need—but in the Lord Jesus Christ? And it is thus the knowledge of Him sanctifies both in life and spirit. But while I get the one that can and does sympathize with me in every want and in every need, if that one were less than divine, less than God, it would not do.

Still that which is brought out in this chapter is not abstractly that He is God. The first chapter of John's Gospel does that; but this first chapter of Hebrews, though bringing out His divine nature, takes it up at the other end. And here it may be observed that the knowledge of the person of Christ is absolutely essential to the understanding of the Scriptures. For example, the Jews were looking for a king, for an heir of David's throne, and they knew that Messiah was to be David's son: but Christ puzzles them by asking them how it was, if He was David's son, He could also be David's Lord? But this epistle

brings out in these two chapters the very person they were expecting. For they take up not merely the divine nature, but also the divine nature in humiliation.

In the first chapter, he speaks of the divine excellency that was in Him,—“the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person;” and in the second chapter, how He was tempted in His manhood, like as we are, yet without sin. It was not merely the divinity of a person known in humiliation that they had before their eyes and their minds, but the carpenter’s son, one “who was in all things made like unto His brethren,” and that man was God.

This changes every thought and feeling as to relationship with God. It changes not only my thoughts about God, but about myself. For I learn what God is to me, when I look at Him in these two chapters. I learn that He clothed Himself in human nature, and so came near to me before I was aware of it; and thus it is not merely

an abstract truth that my soul receives, but "God manifest in the flesh." Christ was to be the manifestation of God to man, and the manifestation of man to God: and that, mark, with all the responsibility of our sins.

He introduces Christ in this chapter not only as the Son, but he also unfolds who this person is, that is now speaking among men. God was in communication with man in testimony from the beginning, and "at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, but hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." This person, this Christ, is the appointed heir of all things; by whom also He made the worlds; so that He is the Creator as well as the heir, as in Colossians. He brings out what He was in coming out from God, and in returning again to God, "who was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by

the word of His power." (Compare Isa. vi with John vi and xii.)

When the Lord spoke from Sinai, His voice shook the earth, but now He speaks by His Son from heaven. Then comes in the blessed character of redemption—for He is the provider of redemption, as well as the upholder of creation. And here it is shown that redemption is a part of the divine glory. "When he had *by himself* purged our sins." He does not say, when He had by His blood purged our sins, (although it was by blood,) but it is *by himself*; and when it is *himself*, it necessarily brings in His glory; for redemption must be the display of divine glory.

Redemption is a divine act by a divine person, and yet by one who was truly a man like ourselves. He was a man who felt what the weight of sin was, when God laid it upon Him, and yet without sin Himself. None but God could have done this, else it would have been surpassing Him in excellence. It must be by Himself that

our sins are purged. And then He sat down at the right hand of God; for He had a right to take His seat above. He had left it and come down in divine love, and now He has a right to return to it again, and sit down. But now He takes a definite and distinct place on the right hand of the majesty on high. How blessedly this comes to us; for now we can consider who this Christ is—this wonderful person who came down so low, and though now so high, yet is near enough to us to come home to our hearts continually. All this is not merely an abstract truth, but *a man* we know who has a divine nature.

In the second Psalm we have His sonship in the world brought out, "Thou art my beloved Son, this day have I begotten thee,"—a thing in connection with *time*—"this *day* have I begotten thee." And again in Luke, first chapter, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." So also in John, Jesus says, "I came forth from the Father,

and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." So in Colossians, the Spirit testifying of Jesus says, "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." The very same one by whom He made the worlds, in His essential divine nature—"for by him were all things created,"—is the one who by Himself has purged our sins. But we still have this Christ; and it must be very evident how different a thing it is to the soul if I can think of Him and consider Him as one that I can eat and drink with, and talk with, to what it would be if I only knew Him as the heir of God, "seated at the right hand of the majesty on high." He was humbled to the very dust of death for us; for "now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth!"

And "being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance a more excellent name than they." He had a title to the superiority over angels, by virtue of His name,—for

here is one exalted who had a title to it by inheritance, being a Son then and heir. Consider the glory of this wonderful, this excellent man, who hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than the angels, and therefore put in a place above the angels, for His having humbled Himself.

And "when God bringeth again the first-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him." The Father is now looking at One who was His daily companion. "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." Here God is giving to this Son of David, one born into the world, the condition and title of a son. "He shall be to me a Son." And we are associated in this, "I will be to him a Father," and Jesus says, "my Father and *your* Father;" thus bringing this relationship with God into the companionship of our daily lives. Jesus could take the place of first-begotten into the world; "this day have I begotten thee," which expresses that He was in the world as

one truly born of God. He was the *only-begotten*, as the Son, but the *first-born* of many brethren. It was the recognition of the Son of David as the Son of God, by the Spirit, when he says, "When he bringeth the first-begotten again into the world He saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." But He has a higher glory than this, for we worship Him; and I could not talk of Him in His full blessedness if I did not see Him in a glory beyond all this. Because as the first-born of many brethren there is that which none other of the brethren can ever have; for behind it all there is the Lord that has saved: the blessedness of His eternal glory behind His humiliation. And this it was that the Jews could not bear; for as soon as Jesus had said, "Before Abraham was, I am," they immediately took up stones to stone Him. This eternal glory which was in the man Christ Jesus, had no glory in man's eye, because it was in man's nature. They had received the law by the disposition of angels. They

would receive any display of power which would keep God at a distance from them. When it was merely the creature, they could sustain the natural glory of God, so to speak, because they could not in any way modify the nature of God to their understandings.

Here it is that He that ascended is the very same that first descended; for it was divine love that put Him in the low place, making exaltation possible.

“Unto the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” “But to the Son he says (still looking at Him as the Son) Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” And then mark how He lets us back again into His companionship with us. “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” He calls us His fellows. He takes us up, and associates us with Him; because if He is addressed as God, the man who is

up there is associated with His fellows. He was anointed *above His fellows*, for it will not do to be merely as His fellows. But it is doubly blessed to know that He is anointed above His fellows. On this ground he says, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." That is what He was as the object of the Father's delight before the foundation of the world.

Now let us look at our blessed Lord when sitting down weary at the well. When the woman came to draw water, Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink, and the woman replied, How is it that thou askest drink of me? When Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that is dependant for a drink of water on such a wicked woman as you are, you would have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water. If you had understood that God had come so near to you, descended so low as to be dependant on you for a cup of cold

water;—had you known God to have been in the lowly One that you met in the place of dependance, you would have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water. And now that He is exalted He calls us His fellows. When He is in the highest point of His exaltation, believers are His fellows, and when He is at the lowest point of His humiliation then Jehovah owns Him as His fellow. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.”

“And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth.” Now He goes, so to express it, into His aboriginal godhead. “Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.” This is a quotation from the 102nd Psalm. Speaking of His lowest humiliation, “Lord, cut me not off in the midst of my days,” the answer to it is this, “Thou in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth.” “Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.” For as a man Jesus was lifted

up into the glorious place as Messiah, and then cast down into the dust of death. "He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days." "Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth." "Thou art the same and thy years shall not fail." Thus we find Him in the lowest point of His humiliation, shining forth as the Lord who laid the foundation of the earth. Thus it is we are made to see the eternal God in the dying man.

He who upholds all things by the word of His power, having by Himself purged our sins, returns and sits down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Thus the soul is given a resting-place in the official glory given to Christ. For the apostle says, "See how God has set this man on His own right hand!" "Sit thou on my right hand;" although in another sense He sat Himself down there. He brings Him into the place in which the Church may view Him as sat down there, because He has accomplished the work; has perfected them

for ever by His one offering, and so sat down. All is finished by one offering. And in another place it is said, He hath "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ," as the testimony of the efficacy of the work of the Son. In the following chapter he speaks of the blessedness of His being tempted like as we are, yet without sin, so that He can sympathize with us in all the trials of our new nature and the difficulties through which we are passing. It is by thus seeing Him that we know the glory of His person.

If an angel leaves its first estate, it is a fallen angel. Any one leaving its first estate, except God, is a fallen creature. If man leaves his first estate, it is to exalt himself. "Ye shall be as gods." But if God leaves his first estate, it is in humiliation. We are now to know Him thoroughly, and so near to us yet exalted above us, and not ashamed to call us brethren.

THE OCCUPATION OF THE HEART WITH GOOD.

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole ; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—Acts iv, 8—12.

Our boldness for Christ before the world, and the calmness of our spirits in the presence of opposition will always hang on the measure in which our *hearts* are occupied with the good we have found in Christ. In truth the proper occupation of the heart of a saint is with good, and nothing but good. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things

are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. iv, 8.)

The mind *habitually* thinking on that which is good, will, in result, find "*the God of peace*" will be with it; as the heart that is careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making known its requests to God, will be kept by "*the peace of God* which passeth all understanding." This is beautifully exemplified in the apostle's walk, generally, and especially in the scene before us.

The rulers are against the preaching of Christ; but the mind of the apostles, dwelling on the blessedness of Christ, and possessed and filled with the things which they had seen and heard, have peace *within*, and power *without*, so that their enemies are obliged to ascribe the effect, not to a natural source, but to companionship with Christ. "They took knowledge

of them that they had been with Jesus." (Verse 13.) This power resulted from their hearts being occupied with *good*. They did not occupy their minds in alleging the evil, much less with the wrong done to themselves; they simply said, "We know Jesus whom ye have crucified." Having known the value of Jesus, and being possessed with a deep sense of the power of the good, they discern at once what was the great sin of those before whom they are arraigned—"whom ye crucified." The apostle was occupied with the love of souls, and hence he did not for a moment trouble himself with the chief priest; but speaking of the good, he condemned the evil. If he says, "this is the stone which was set at nought of you builders," it is because his heart was possessed with the truth, "neither is there salvation in any other."

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It is of the last importance, therefore, to attend to the injunction, "if there be any virtue, if

there be any PRAISE, think on these things." We cannot feed our own souls nor the souls of the saints when speaking of evil. It is only when speaking of *good* that we get *refreshed* and God gets any *praise*. We are to be "simple concerning evil, and *wise* concerning *good*." When the soul delights in the good it is because it is regenerate and has tasted the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tell such an one that he was regenerated by baptism or any other figment, and he will know better. The soul having tasted the good becomes master of the evil. A deep sense of the knowledge of the *good* will keep even the weakest saint from the *deception of the evil*. It is the knowledge of the good that gives the power. But this is not obtained by elaborate teaching, but the teaching of the Holy Ghost in what is good. If a man tell me I must not talk of the salvation which is in Jesus—must not speak to souls—all he could say would never prevent me. My answer would be as the apostle's—"I cannot

but speak that which I have seen and heard."

No praise can arise out of a soul dwelling on evil. The blessedness of being *possessed* with *good* is seen in Malachi ii, 6, 7: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." The character of a soul filled with the spirit of Jesus is, that it must ever *crave the good*. All we want for every possible *exigency* is to be found in Jesus. If I want *power*, I look up to *Christ risen* and *get it*, in what *he is there*, "far above all principality and power." (Eph. i, 21.) If I want love and sympathy, I get it in Jesus *down here*. I see God (in Jesus) on earth; I find divine glory developed in the lowest place on earth; for when Jesus was brought lowest, then we see God most; and in some

circumstances nothing but God in Jesus could do what Jesus did when on earth. If I want the comfort of love, I must carry my heart there, and get my spirit imbued with what Jesus was on earth. For I get holy sympathy in Jesus down here—*power* in what Christ is at God's right hand.

THE WAY OF GOD'S BLESSING.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”—2 Cor. vi, 17, 18.

Wherever there is blessing it draws to God and to one another. Our natural state is separation from God and from one another. The spirit of selfishness—the effect of sin—is always separation. If God calls unto unity, He must separate us from evil. Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It is not a union

only in sentiment, but a vital union—a separation from evil, for God cannot bear evil. The great God cannot be where there is unrighteousness. It is unity in God and separation from all evil,—God drawing us into communion with Himself through the Lord Jesus. It is no matter where it is, but there must be separation from evil in cleaving to that which is good.

In verse 18 we get the way in which God reveals Himself to us when separate from evil: "I will be a Father unto you;" and then the position into which we are brought: "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

What I would press is the essential character of the position into which we are brought. We find ourselves associated as children in His family. In our everlasting character, in the life we have received, we are sons. We are not servants, but sons, being of this family. We cannot be children of two families. We are children of one family. Being thus children of

God, we have no association with anything else. In this way the Christian must be a separate person.

Note the speciality of the character in which He is a Father to us: "saith the Lord Almighty." In looking to Him as our Father, we look at Him as Almighty. Our blessing flows from our experience of God. All the exercises of the Christian bring out to him the trustworthiness of God, the certainty of His interference in all things. As regards all the details of life, we ought to bring in the faithfulness and Almightyness of God; in every circumstance to recognize the Lord (Jehovah) Almighty.

CHRIST, THE CHIEFEST AMONG TEN THOUSAND.

Song v, 10.

O Jesus! the glory, the wonder, and love,
 Of angels and perfected spirits above,
 And saints who behold Thee not, yet dearly love,
 Rejoicing in hope of thy glory:
 Thou only, and wholly, art lovely and fair,
 Who robb'st not JEHOVAH, with Him to compare.

JEHOVAH'S own image glows in thee,—shines there
In visible bodily glory.

Worth divine dwells in thee ;

Excellent dignity ;

Beauty and Majesty ;

Glory environs thee ;

Power, honour, dominion, and life rest on thee,

O thou chiefest among the ten thousands !

Wherever we view thee, new glories arise ;
The Man who's God's fellow, who rides on the skies ;
Made flesh, dwelt among us ; brought God to our
eyes ;

In grace and truth showing His glory.

Thou spak'st to existence the heavens and their
hosts,

The earth and its fulness, the seas and their coasts ;

Time hangs on thy Word, and eternity boasts

To crown and adorn thee with glory.

Worth divine, &c.

But how lovely and fair dost thou look in our eyes
When we view thee incarnate in childhood's
disguise !

Thy loves, past all knowledge, with rapture
surprise

And ravish our hearts with thy glory.

Thou in thine own body, accurs'd on the tree,

Did'st bear all our sins, while thy God frowned
on thee,

Expiring in blood in our stead ;—and now we

Exult in thy merit and glory.

Worth divine, &c.

Thy blood all divine, from the grave back again
Brought thee, King of glory, thou Lamb who
wast slain!

First-born from the dead, crowned with honour
supreme,

Thy name is exalted in glory.

O hasten thy coming that in glory adored,
We may see thee, our Saviour, our God, and our
Lord,

And joy in thy joy over all things restored,

And eternity blaze with thy glory.

Worth divine, &c.

From a Scotch Hymn Book—slightly altered.

SOCIETIES AND PRAYER.

There is too much bustle made by various societies. Six praying men would be of more use than ten such societies. A hypocrite may be very exact in all outward appearances—may actively support all our societies—but a hypocrite cannot pray. It is God alone who sustains prayer.

THE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD FROM THE FIRST ADAM TO THE REVELATION OF THE SECOND.

Read Hebrews ix.

In a preceding paper on the 10th and 11th of Romans, there was presented the reconciliation of free *grace* to the whole race of man—be it Jew or Gentile: man under law, or man without law—all being brought in on the *level of sin*—all being received on the ground of free sovereign grace—with the special and unconditional promises which God had made to the Jews.

My thought now is to enter a little more in detail into the Lord's dealings in the dispensation in which we live. But first I would take a more general view of God's dealings with man from the beginning; and for this purpose I now read the 9th of Hebrews, as the 26th verse of the chapter is the great centre truth on which it all hangs. "Now once, *in the end of the world*, (that is morally,) hath he appeared to put *away sin* by the sacrifice of himself."

All that God had done up to *that point* was the bringing out of sin in the *first man*; but there followed immediately the

the putting away of that sin in the *second man*. Then, passing over the present interval, he speaks of this second man appearing again a second time. Here, then, is the turning point of all God's ways—the death of Christ and its consequences, His coming again to take possession of all that His first coming had given Him a title to. They were His before, "For by him were all things created," &c.; but in His second coming He takes possession of all that which His blood had bought back again to Himself; "For he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The end of man is to die, or rather, we may say, he there begins for eternity; and it is terrible to think of beginning in judgment. But God in Christ has introduced another thing; for as the end of man, either Jew or Gentile, is death and judgment, so unto us that "look for him shall he appear a second time *without sin unto salvation*." The first time He came it was about *sin*, in the sense of bearing it, being occupied about it. He

was *made sin*—*Himself the sinless one*—but having put away the sin, He comes the second time without sin unto salvation. In His second coming there is no question about sin whatever, but the full bringing out of God's purpose of blessing in consequence of the putting away of sin. Man's portion is death and judgment, as contrasted with the salvation Christ brings. But mark another thing, in the meanwhile; *priesthood* comes in. He is hidden from the world, as He said, "the world seeth me no more;" but He "appears in the presence of God for us." The word *appears* is a legal term, indicating Him as the One who represents His people. So He, as our high priest, is representing us in the presence of God. He has taken His place and *sat* down at God's right hand, having by Himself purged our sins. And we need such a high priest in our daily walk. But then, as regards His bodily presence, He is gone; therefore we have to walk as pilgrims and strangers in a seducing world, though not of it, with "our life hid with Christ in God."

Then comes out another thing, the veil being rent, He has sent down the Holy Ghost to be in us, and to associate us in heart and life with Him in heaven, thus

giving us the proper exclusive heavenly character, of a heavenly people, now on the earth. For Christ being in the presence of God for us, our portion is in heaven. We are in the position of Stephen, who being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up into heaven through the rent veil, saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. The heavens were opened to his spiritual gaze, which is now always true to us; and all we are now waiting for is, that Christ may come and take us up bodily there. The crucifixion of Christ was the utter rejection of the second Adam by the first Adam. This was man's turning point; for man had been tried in every possible way, but all in vain. God says, "What shall I do?" I will send my beloved Son, it may be they will reverence my Son. But when they saw Him they said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." All the dealings of God with man, *as man*, ended here; therefore it is called "this present *evil world*." The rending of the veil, which closed all the previous dealings of God with man, opened the way to heaven, and while it condemned the sinner, it saved the believer. It condemned the world, but brought out full salvation to all that believe, associating

them with heavenly things. For through the rent veil, (that is, Christ's flesh,) we have access into the holiest of all.

Then comes the question how far *such saved ones* (for I speak now of real Christians) have been faithful in maintaining, as a heavenly witness, their testimony to the world's condemnation, and of their own association, as a heavenly people on the earth, and their head in heaven. But instead of entering on this question now, we will go a little through God's dealings with the *first Adam* from the beginning up to the introduction of the *second Adam*. We will trace all the different changes in God's dealings with the first man, till we come to this new starting point, "created anew in Christ Jesus." God has taken away the *first* that He may establish the second.

All God's actual dealings with man, till he came to the point of crucifying His Son, show how the patient goodness of God had tried man in every way, until obliged to pronounce man, on experimental evidence, to be *utterly bad*. Of course, God knew what man was all the while.

First, then, we will trace God's dealings with man *as man*. Secondly, with the Jews. Thirdly with this new man in Christ—for

in whatever position man has been placed, it has only been to start aside like a broken bow, and to turn from God. This is a solemn truth, and one that Christians ought to know *well*; for never was there a time when man's thoughts of *man* were so exalted; when so many efforts were being made; so many theories maintained as at the present, that man as man may be turned to some profit. The great *cardinal* truth is, that there is *no good in man*. And it is most important that the soul should thoroughly understand this, as it gives both simplicity and stability. For the simple knowledge that man is thoroughly bad cuts at the root of ten thousand theories all based upon the notion that good is to be found in man. But all these deep-laid theories will drop off by thousands, like leaves in autumn, if it only be believed by the soul that in man *good is not to be found*. The death of Christ is the great and infallible contradiction to all assumptions of the contrary. "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Thus on the cross was proved to the whole world that God could find no good in man. It is also given doctrinally in Romans, and historically in the Old Testament.

The next point is, that it is God's work to bring man back. And mark the blessed way in which God works to bring man back. For after sin entered there was no rest for God or man, but in that rest which God hath prepared. So the only rest the poor sinner can find is in "God's rest." God works and then enters into His rest. Man rests in God, and then works for the glory of God—for there is no rest now but that into which Christ entered; and we which have believed do enter into rest. The Sabbath rest was in connexion with Jews as a sign of the covenant between them and God, which supposes that after the work of the week is done, then rest comes; and, doubtless, in connexion with creation, it is a blessing to all. When Christ was on the earth the question of the sabbath was constantly raised; and when healing a man on the sabbath-day, they charged Him with breaking the sabbath. And how does He meet this charge? By saying, "My Father worketh *hitherto*, and I work." A good and holy God could not find rest, or a sabbath, amidst the wickedness of man. There must be in such a state of things either judgment or working in grace. God's Son, therefore, came down to the earth, not to keep a

sabbath in its polluted state, but to work in grace. And through communion in life with the second Adam, (God's rest,) believers get all the fulness of the blessings of that rest.

But now we will look a little into this working from the *beginning*. And for this, let us go back to the garden of Eden; for there we shall find man first put to the test in a state of innocence. And what do we find? A total and complete failure; for nothing could possibly exceed man's insensibility to God's *authority*, to His *goodness*, and to His *truth*! Man abandoned God to gratify his lust in eating the forbidden fruit. Nor was this all, for Adam sets up Satan as the one to be trusted in instead of God. God had surrounded Adam with every blessing, and Satan comes and says, "Ye shall not surely die." God is jealous of your prerogative, for He has not spoken truth when He said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And on this liar's and murderer's word man treats God as a grudging God. For Satan says, God has kept back from you that which is good. Thus man believes Satan and makes God a liar. I am not here speaking of the rejection of grace, but of the entire casting off of the

authority of God and His truth, and of the open manifestation of sin. Thus there was an end, without a possibility of return, of man's *innocence*. It was gone, and gone for ever. There could, therefore, be no return to innocence—no going back to man's Paraisaical happiness; and that he might not live on in his misery for ever, God turns him out of the garden and sets the cherubim with a flaming sword to keep him from the tree of life. But what does God do in despite of this failure? He sets aside the first Adam and brings in the second Adam. In Genesis iii, 15, "The *seed* of the *woman* shall bruise the serpent's head." Mark, here, the *seed* of the *woman* is the second Adam. There was *no* promise to the first Adam, for he was in no *sense* the *seed* of the woman, though we may trust he was a partaker of the blessing. There was grace, but not in connexion with the first Adam. Sin had come in by the woman; therefore Christ, the putter away of sin, came in by the woman also. All God's ways and purposes tend to the second Adam, "Who shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The turning point is the rejection or acceptance of Christ. Whenever the least morsel of Christ is apprehended by a soul and used,

the Holy Ghost can come in and give power to the testimony, though in the midst of many mistakes. But when Christ is not received and there is dependance on the *first* Adam and his resources, though there may be the *appearance of fruit* for a season, perishing must be the *final result*. I see no signs of idolatry before the flood; but men being the children of the *wicked one*, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, corruption and violence filled the earth; and these two principles continue up to the end: as you get *corruption* in the mystical Babylon, and *violence* in the persecutions carried on by the beast in the latter day. Then in the garden of Eden we get the two *trees*—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. The first of these trees shows *man's responsibility*. The second tree is connected with God's gift of life. And in these two trees are set forth the two great principles that have given rise to all the controversies that have agitated the mind of man from the beginning. The simple truth is this, if man is put under responsibility—say the law for instance—he fails; but Christ comes in and glorifies God by fulfilling man's responsibilities, and then God can

freely give *life*. Thus, in the work and person of Christ, we get the perfect and eternal solution of every abstract principle. For the very weakest saint knows that Christ bears the whole responsibility, and that He gives life; and he wonders that men should find such difficulty, when to him all is simple. For the soul that has Christ within knows that it is not merely an abstract principle to be *reasoned about*. For how can the *Christian* reason about Christ's having borne the curse for Him, while he himself is in possession of life in Christ? The saint owns his responsibilities, but having failed, Christ has come in, and life is given in grace. But now we will return to the double character of *corruption* and *violence* which became so insupportable that God was obliged to come in with the flood. Then we get Noah saved out of it, and with Noah God begins the world over again. *Man* is again put under trial, for God brings in a new thing. Government is added. Thus man is strengthened against the violence which had prevailed before the flood, and which man, not being altered, will still continue. That which is technically called 'the power of the sword' is given into man's hand. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be

shed." Well, failure comes in again; for after awhile, Noah plants a vineyard and gets drunk with the fruit thereof, and Ham dishonours his father. Before the flood there was the prophecy of *Enoch*, (see Jude 14,) which was a mark of what God was going to do; and after his testimony, Enoch goes up to heaven. This is the Church's testimony now, to warn of the coming judgment which will take place when she is removed. Noah's testimony was quite another thing. "He, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house;" for Noah passed through all the judgment and begins the world again. He is the type of Israel in the latter day. But Enoch warned others and then went up to heaven before the judgment came.

Then we have another most terrible thing. After the flood idolatry comes in.

There were two great results of the breaking down in righteousness of those in the place Noah was set in. *First*, the association of man to get himself a *name*—"let us make us a name"—and in doing this they were associating themselves against God. For, speaking of intrinsic title, God is the only one who has any *right* to a *name*; and the only name God will allow to be set up on the earth is that of the *man Christ*

Jesus. Thus, in man's effort to make himself a name, we see the principle of *pride* brought out, and the very judgment they were seeking to prevent, by getting themselves a name, was the very judgment with which God visited them. "For the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the earth." Then in one man, Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one in the earth—"a mighty hunter before the Lord"—we have the individual development of *will* and *tyranny* in *government*, instead of *righteous government*. Then in Babel, in the association for a name, the principle of *pride*. Thus we get the two great acts of corruption.

Then *devil worship* comes in; for when men were scattered abroad on the face of earth, not liking to retain God in their knowledge, they began to offer to devils and not to God. (1 Cor. x, 20.) They became conscious of dependance in spite of themselves; and therefore it is said in Joshua xxiv, 2, "Your fathers served other gods." The scripture never speaks a word in vain, and now we can understand the meaning of the call of Abraham, and what he was called out from. God appeared to Abraham and called him out from serving *other gods*, to serve the living

and true God. The world was sinking fast into idolatry, and there was not only man's *pride*, in getting a *name* and greatness on the earth, and tyranny and *self-will* in government, but, alas! the coming in of *Satan's power* in demon worship: for it is in idolatry that Satan's great power comes in. And here it is important to mark that Satan's *power* must not be confounded with *man's wickedness*. Satan's power is altogether another thing, and quite apart from man's wickedness, though often most mischievously confounded with it. Now God is calling a *people* out; before it was only *individuals* whose hearts were successively touched with grace. But now God is distinctly separating a people to Himself. Thus Abraham is called the father of the faithful; and God has a *special stock on earth* called out of the surrounding idolatry, to be a depository of the promises of God, called the *olive tree* in Romans xi. In Abraham we find three great principles — election, calling, and promise. Abraham did not get into the land until Terah his father was dead. He came into the land of Canaan, but God gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on, yet He promised that He would give it to him for a pos-

session. Therefore "by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

After this we get another thing. A people were to be redeemed. Redemption was, in a figure, brought in when God visited Egypt in judgment and with a mighty arm brought out a people to Himself. The blood of the pascal Lamb was the sign of their shelter from judgment, also of their separation to God Himself. Here we see the distinctiveness of His love in that it was to *Himself* that they were brought. As it is said, "How I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to *myself*." Then the Red Sea passed brings out the song of salvation. Then from the Red Sea to Sinai it was all grace; God dealt with them in grace. They murmured again and again, but they got the quails and the water as they wanted *without any reproach*. It was perfect unmingled grace. At Sinai another change takes place, another principle comes in. The promises which were given to Abraham without any condition are taken by the people on *condition of obedience*. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." This was entirely a

new condition and principle. Man now puts himself under covenant with God, in which man is to perform his part and God His. Thus Israel put themselves under the Law, to obtain by their own obedience that which God had promised unconditionally. But before they get what God had spoken, the ten commandments, they had made themselves *another god*; for they had lost sight of the *man Moses* and made them a *golden calf* and said, "These be thy *gods*, O Israel"—the very thing out of which Abraham had been called! *Idolatry* they had turned back to, the "serving other gods," and cast off the true God altogether. Thus all was gone. Then we have another change, another principle in action. *The Mediator* is brought in, and it is then in connexion with a mediator between themselves and God. And the mediator Moses, in pleading with God, pleads His promises and comes in as mediator between God and man, to maintain man in the blessings in which he could not maintain himself. Moses was but a *shadow* of Christ, and not the *very image*. Aaron is the next, established to be priest in the temple and to offer sacrifices; but just as his consecration is ended, strange fire is offered by his two sons Nadab and Abihu.

This is as we have ever seen the case with man. Though vengeance is taken, man goes on sinning, and the Lord goes on raising up saviours and deliverers, until the time of Eli, when not only his wicked sons were destroyed, but God's strength, the *ark*, was delivered into the enemies' hands.

Mediatorship and priesthood having both failed, and the ark, the very place of God's presence being delivered into the hands of the Philistines, where there was *faith* in Israel in the little remnant of that day, it could only say, "*Ichabod*," "The glory has departed."

But before taking up David, we will return to Abraham again, and take up promises made to Abraham, to show their distinctiveness from the Church. First, the way in which Abraham is the father of many nations, as in Gen. xii. The reasoning of Paul in Galatians is founded on Gen. xii. They were Jewish promises. All the earth had fallen into idolatry and Abraham was called out of this idolatry, that God might make him the *stock of promise*—the olive tree. (as in Rom. xi.) The 2nd and 3rd verses run thus:—"I will make of thee a great *nation*, and I will bless thee and make thy name great. And *in thee* shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Abraham is the vessel, so to speak, in which the promises are deposited. (I drop the great nation, that being Jewish.) Then in the 22nd of Genesis, this promise is confirmed to *the seed*. Abraham offers up Isaac and receives him back in a figure; Isaac thus representing Christ in resurrection. Then God says, "By myself have I sworn that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore. This multitudinous seed are the Jews. "And *thy seed* (*Christ*) shall possess the gate of his enemies." "And *in thy seed* (that is Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "In *thy seed*," that is the *one seed*, *Christ*. The promises that were given to Abraham were confirmed to him in (the *one seed*) Christ, for there can be no mixing up the two. For Isaac, being raised from the dead, though but in a figure, we know must keep the promises distinct. Therefore the apostle argues in Galatians iii, 20, "If ye be *Christ's*, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs *according to the promise*. Thus those who believe in Jesus are "heirs according to the promise," made not to the multitudinous seed, but to the *one seed* which is *Christ*. There are two sets of promises—

those to Abraham's seed, as the stars of heaven for multitude, in connexion with the *land*; then Isaac being offered up in a figure, confirming the other promises in which all the families of the earth will be blessed in the person of *Christ the one seed*. Mark that both of these sets of promises are *unconditional*. For thus Abraham was made the depository of the promises given to him unconditionally, both with reference to Israel and the nations. But in Exodus xix, where God says, "Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself," we have an entire record of simple grace, without any condition whatever, from the *Red Sea* to *Sinai*. But at *Sinai* the question of condition comes in. "If ye be obedient, ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." And Israel said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." And how long did it last? It was gone directly. Whatever depends on man's stability is gone before he gets it. And so before the *ten words* reached Israel they had worshipped the golden calf, thus casting off God entirely. And thus Israel had lost their immediate connexion with God, for it was then ordained in the hands of a mediator, having broken down in

theirs. God says, Let me alone and I will consume them in a moment; and Moses says, "Why doth thy wrath wax hot against *thy* people, which *thou* hast brought up. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants," &c.; then goes on pleading the unconditional promises figurative of Christ, and says it is *thy* people. And God turns from His wrath and goes up with the mediator. "My presence shall go with *thee*"—not with the people. God calls the people the mediator's people. What beauty and grace there is in this. First, God says, I will consume them in a moment, they are so stiff-necked. But their ornaments are put off, and Moses pleads their very stiff-neckedness as a reason why God must go up with them. Thus was their stiff-neckedness counterbalanced by the grace. For the moment grace is brought in by the exercise of mediation, the very stiff-neckedness which prevented God's going up with them lest He should consume them, was the very thing pleaded by the mediator why God must go up with them. Then God acts on a different principle. Mediation is the grace which maintains people in the blessing brought by redemption; and this principle brings in *priesthood*. Here mark,

for it is important to see, that redemption brings in priesthood, and not priesthood redemption. Priesthood maintains the people in the presence of Him who redeemed them; for if I am to walk with a *holy God*, I must have that intercourse maintained. If God has redeemed us to walk in the light as He is in the light, we need the priesthood to maintain us in the light. But if you confound redemption and priesthood, you will never find settled peace, for you will be looking for acceptance from something to be done or interceded for. But priesthood maintains our communion with a holy God.

I now turn to the subject of man's failure—Israel failing under the law—*mediation* comes in; and priesthood failing under Eli—the ark is gone—then there is another, redemption by power. And now the link between Israel and God is *royalty*, sustained in the person of David the king. This was the last link between Israel and God; His patience still forbearing. And now we get *royalty* sustaining Israel under the condition of obedience. The temple was newly set up and filled with God's glory. But *royalty* fails in David, Solomon, and Rehoboam. The obtaining and enjoyment of promised blessings must

not always be taken as a mark of God's approval. Jacob told a lie in order to obtain the promised blessing. Solomon had asked of God wisdom, and God added riches and honour, but then he obtains the promised riches and honour, by disobedience; for he multiplied to himself horses and chariots which God had forbidden. We require faith for the means, as well as the end. That is, we must wait patiently for God Himself to make good to us the very blessings He promised. Then again, Solomon loved many strange wives, and they turned away his heart from the Lord. In the very three things God had forbidden to a *king* Solomon failed. Let us ever remember that our one business is to walk with God, in the humble and lowly details of every day life, waiting on God to arrange everything for us; for God's ways towards us show out His character and His faithfulness, in making good to us what He has promised. For if we obtain the promised blessings through our own contrivance, they will be accompanied by sorrow and chastening; nay, the very blessings themselves may become the source of sorrow, because we always have idolatry in *the heart*. But God meets this failure in royalty by another

and fresh promise, in Shear Jashub, "*a remnant shall return.*" Isa. vii, 3. (See margin.) *The nation* was at that time cut off. "Make the heart of this people fat," &c. Now God promises another thing; a seed is promised to David. Before it was the seed of the woman, but now a seed is promised to David, to sit upon his throne for ever. After this, God says, in Ezek. xxi. 25, "Thou profaned wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more until *he* come whose *right it is*; and I will give it him." After this God entrusts power in Gentile hands. The first was Nebuchadnezzar—power in one man—for man's vain thought is, if I could do all that I wish, I should make the world a paradise. Well, God tries him, and what is the result? The golden image is set up, and God's own people are cast into the fire, for refusing to fall down and worship it. Secondly, the impiety of Belshazzar follows, in prostituting the vessels of the temple to the honour of his *false gods*. And thirdly,

Darius sets himself up to be the *true God*. Here are brought out three principles of evil, which will be fully developed in the latter day. *Cyrus* then comes in as the restorer, setting it all aside—typical of Christ. Then prophecy comes in to sustain the remnant until the Messiah came. Then in the rejection of Christ, it was not merely the manifestation of man's sin, but the utter hatred of man's heart against God. "They have *hated* both me and my Father." Thus the tree was proved to be utterly bad, and the more it was digged about and dunged, the more bad fruit it produced." "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Then Pontius Pilate being the governor of Judea was the representative of the authority which God had put into man's hand, and which the Lord owned when Pilate said to Him "Knowest thou not that *I* have *power* to *crucify* thee, and power to *release* thee? to which the Lord replied, "Thou couldest have *no power* at all against me, except it were *given* thee from *above*; thus teaching Pilate that having received the power from God, he was responsible to God for the exercise of it. And how did he use it? In *condemning God's Son*. Thus the very one who should have wrought *justice* in

the earth delivers up Christ to be crucified, at the same time knowing Him to be innocent ; as he said, "Take ye him and crucify him, for I *find no fault* with him." Thus was fulfilled that word, "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness that iniquity was there." What comes then? The solemn sentence is passed. The world is condemned. "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." "The world seeth me no more." The death of Christ closed the scene. Then the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The very thing that brought out the judgment revealed a heavenly salvation, which was before hidden by the veil. The death of Christ is the end of the world *morally*. Man has been tried in every way, and failed, and sin in every shape and form has been brought up to a head, and met in this one act of rending the veil. For "*once in the end of the world (morally) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*" When the sin is proved, it is put away. "They have seen and hated both me and my father." The very act that proved their hatred of God,

put away their sin. "If I had not come, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin, but they have seen and hated both me and my Father." That very crowning act of the utter enmity and wilfulness of man, brought the sinner to God, *without the sin*. For the Lamb, without spot, *by one act*, divine in *power* (by Himself,) put away the sin "by the sacrifice of himself." The veil being rent, we, with *unveiled face*, behold the glory of the Lord. As to our bodies, we know they are still on the earth, but our position, *morally*, is in heaven, Christ being there. The high priest under the law *stood*, but this man, after He had *once* offered *sat down for ever*. The whole work being accomplished, thus connects us with heaven. We are only waiting for the redemption of the body—we are accepted in the beloved. He is my life and my righteousness, and I want nothing more. All belongs to me now, by virtue of life in this heavenly man, now in heaven *itself* for me. We are only waiting His return, but our conversation is connected with Him up there now, for we are always confident while *waiting*, which may be in order to our ripening. There are three things connected with this position. First, my life is hid with Christ; second, if

I die before He comes, my spirit goes up to Him immediately—"Absent from the body, present with the Lord;" thirdly, if He come and take me up before I die, then I shall return with Him. "When Christ, who is our life, shall *appear*, then shall we *appear* with him in glory." But while He is up on high, we are members of His body down here, and cry, "Come, Lord Jesus." And consequent on our position, we ought to be as pilgrims and strangers on this earth, for we stand between the *once offered* and *appearing* Jesus. We have neither the *world* nor the *glory* yet; but we are identified with the rejected one. Christ's portion is our portion: we get it along with Himself, and we are to be conformed to Him now. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—*His bride*; and when that is made ready, He will come and take her up to glory.

The Lord give us to know the wonderful grace of Christ, who, "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty might be rich"—"Who loved us and gave Himself for us," according to His perfect work, which has set us in the presence of His father in love.

FRAGMENT.

There is nothing to be more cordially abhorred than the pretence of love and unity being used to dishonour Him who is the centre, life, and sole object and title of it. There is no devil so bad as the devil who clothes himself with charity. It is the spirit of the day—latitudinarianism. “Charity is the bond of perfectness,” but Christ is the test of this, as of all else, and He makes it so. “The poor ye have always with you, and me ye have not always.” Thus we must judge—judge, I mean, our own conduct. Local unity, founded on abandonment or indifference to the truth, is a miserable hostility (in sparing oneself) to gathering with Christ, the only true and universal unity. I do not know what is meant by unity, if the foundations of all unity that is worth anything are denied.

END OF VOL. II.