

# HELPS BY THE WAY:

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE,

DESIGNED FOR THE MINISTRY OF A FULL AND PRECIOUS  
CHRIST TO THOSE FOR WHOM HE DIED.

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VOLUME I.—1873.

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“Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you for Him hath God the Father sealed.”—JOHN vi. 27.

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# HELPS BY THE WAY.

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## "SEEN OF ANGELS."

LUKE, ii. 13, 14.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

THE passage in Timothy (1 Tim., iii. 16) tells us *who* it was that was "Seen of Angels," when heaven made known its joy to earth that wondrous night. It was "God manifest in the flesh" they saw in the child just born in Bethlehem; and far-reaching were to be the consequences of that amazing fact. Earth was asleep, and men dreamed nothing of this infinite joy which was come to them. Heaven was awake, bright with expectation and delight. The "Sons of God," who had welcomed with shouts of joy the laying of the foundations of the earth, were here with notes of lowlier praise in presence of a little babe, who should lay deeper the foundations of a *new* creation—nay, who Himself should be the "beginning of the creation of God,"—of what alone God could own as fully His.

Holy, unjealous praise it was, that could celebrate the visitation of this lower and fallen world in such a manner by the Son of God. Not that they reaped nothing by it. Indeed they could not but be infinite gainers by the mere *sight* of Jesus. The heart of God, their God, told out in Him in whom, "full of grace and truth," Divine glory shone, could not but be full of richest blessing, even for the blessed and unfallen inhabitants of heaven. This one expression of the Apostle's. "*seen of angels*"

may suggest to us surely, how much lay for them in their seeing Him. Did they not know God much better? Were they not in very deed brought nearer to Him? Did not the everlasting arms that were now wrapped round men, in that very act enclose them also!

But we are going to learn what filled angels' hearts, from their own lips. It may be—God grant it may—to you also, dear reader, "good tidings of great joy" that they shall bring to you just now. Yes, and whoever you are, I am sure it may be so. No sorrow so great but that God's story of grace may remove it. No burden so great but it may lift it off. No prisoner so deep in the lowest dungeon of Satan, tied and bound with the chain of his sins, but it may be to him the welcome voice of forgiveness and release. It is the "chief of sinners," chief of Apostles, who says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto *salvation*"—read that word in the simplest and apply it in the widest possible way: it means "*DELIVERANCE*,"—"for it is the power of God unto *salvation* to EVERY ONE that believeth." (Rom. i. 16.)

There are three things in what the angels see and celebrate in the birth of Jesus. Let us look at the first thing first. It is a great thing to get not merely truth, but truth in divine order. Whenever you get that, God has the first place necessarily,—"*Glory to God in the highest.*"

It is a sad proof of where we are, that this is not the natural order with us. We naturally begin with ourselves first, and it is even well if God is not left out altogether. But there is no blessing for us so. God must have His place and His glory, and all good for us depends upon His having it.

The law claimed this from man. To "love God with all one's heart and soul and mind and strength" was

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declared by it to be his *first* duty. But none, from the highest to the lowest, responded to that claim. No, none. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Abraham or David could no more stand upon that ground than you or I. "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." "How solemn and emphatic that repetition, "no, not one!" There was nothing but Adam over again in all his children. There was no difference among men as to this, no "second man."

But the angels were rejoicing now, because a "second man" had come. "The second man is the Lord from heaven." (1 Cor. xv. 47.) God was to get now *from man* the glory due Him. Tried in every possible way,—exposed and exposing Himself to every form of sorrow and evil,—on the cross bearing the wrath due to our sins, He did only and always the thing that pleased God. His meat and His drink was to do His will; it was the one thing for which He had come, and in a wilderness, with power to furnish for Himself from the stones themselves the food He needed, that bodily need was with Him no sufficient motive to supply it, where God's will was not expressed. That obedience of Christ was a wonderful thing; very different from what we often mean by obedience, which is only *not* transgressing certain limits in doing our own will. He had no motive for doing *anything*, but that it was His Father's will. That will He had come into the world to do, and *nothing else*. "Lo, I come—in the volume of the book it is written of me—I delight to do thy will, O my God."

Thus He could say, at the close of that will-less life down here, in the simple consciousness of the perfection of that obedience, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." On the other hand the Father's voice from heaven gave its own testimony of delight in Him as openly. At Jordan, where linking Himself with the sinners of

Israel in the Baptism of John, that voice singled Him out from all the rest: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On the Mount of Transfiguration, in company with a Moses and Elias, linking Himself thus with saints in glory as before with sinners,—still and no less that voice once more separates Him from all others: "*This* is my Beloved Son; hear *Him*." But more than all, far more, in the quiet of a morn before it dawned, when the keepers of the closed and guarded tomb scattered from it, broken without hand, and the "keys of death" were at the girdle of Him they could not hold;—when again, in simple majesty, without chariot or horse of fire, or the ministry of angels' hands, a man ascended from Olivet to God;—finally; when at Pentecost with the shaking of the house and tongues of fire, soon to kindle among men, the Holy Ghost came down to bear witness of One sitting at the right hand of God: (Acts ii. 32, 34,)—then and thus was He declared to be the Son of God with power, *according to the Spirit of holiness*, by resurrection from the dead." (Rom. i. 4.)

Triumphant witness this of what angels already celebrate over the manger of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest." But what glory to God, who shall tell? The wonder of that life whose earthly limits were the manger and the grave, deepens immeasurable as we look at it. Was it alone, that here was One, man amongst men, to whom His God was, not simply supreme, but *all*? That was not half the truth. Nay, but this "Second Man" was "*the Lord from Heaven*."

"Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the

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Cross." These were the steps of that wondrous humiliation, in which surely every ray of glory given up by the Son of God was glory gained by the Father. He, among men meekest and lowliest, the patient sufferer of sorrow that had no equal, shielding Himself from nothing which could come on man as man, yet pouring freely forth for man all the wealth of the Divine treasury; taking out infirmities, bearing our sicknesses; spite of suffering, spite of return of hate for His good will, One whose "delights were with the sons of men"—O reader, *this* was "God Manifest; this was the glory of the Only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father; and what is faith in *this* Jesus, but that which gives to your soul a GOD you cannot else know, before whom you stand in adoration with the angels here, crying, "Glory to God in the highest."

It was not for them He came, yet angels saw and worshipped. By and bye it will fill heaven and earth for eternity with rejoicing worshippers. God glorified! yes, and how? *By the simple display of what He is.* There is no other God, *back* of this One who "has spoken" to me "in His Son." I know Him. I have a picture of the "Invisible God." His glory shines for me in the face of Jesus. How different from my fears! How different from my unbelief! Yes, beloved reader, and He it is who says, and has title to say to every weary heart under the sun, *whatever has made it so*, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*."

That brings in the second thing in the angels' words: "and on earth, *peace*." Perhaps some weary one may say, "I thought you were forgetting that." Not so, but we have taken the only possible way to arrive at it. *He* has "made peace by the blood of His cross." Don't you need to know whose shoulders could sustain so great a burden? Now, beloved, look at Jesus. What think

ye of Him? Was He not the fitting Person to undertake for you? and would not work done by Him be well done? Even so has He proclaimed it; upon the cross itself, that you might know where and when and how it was wrought, the Son of God proclaimed His work as "finished." "It is finished." If you ask *what* was finished,—I answer, without controversy a work upon the ground of which *peace* could be preached (Eph. ii. 18) as *MADE* (Col. i. 20), and not to *make*. You and I have not to make it, not to add to it, but only to hear, to believe it, and to *be at peace*. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God"—how?—"through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.)

Did I not say, it was a very short way now to peace? God glorified is more than God *satisfied*, but God *satisfied* is peace. Thus there is much more than "peace" through the blood of Jesus; but peace there is. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace."

Little as yet indeed do we see of it "on earth." But it is sweet to know what is in God's thought for man. It will find its full accomplishment when the "Prince of peace" shall come again. But meanwhile God would have every ear hear, every heart attend to the preaching of this peace. The first words of the risen Lord in the assembly of His own were "Peace be unto you." And when He had so said, He showed them His hands and His side. And then again once more He said, "Peace be to you." And immediately He added, "As my Father hath *sent* Me, even so send I you."

They were to be His messengers to publish that peace to others which He had preached to them. And with what tender assurance to the heart of every one would He have the word proclaimed: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the good news to *every* creature." There could be no mistake, there can be none, in saying to every soul on earth, "It is for *you*." And mark, how

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simple, how sure the consequence. "He that *believeth*, and is baptized, *shall* be saved." Christ has said it. Will His word fail, more than His work? Trust it, beloved reader. Trust it without a doubt, and though "heaven and earth may pass away," His "word shall not pass away."

Thus it is "peace on earth." Man refusing and rejecting, the Lord might foresee as the result of the preaching even of His "gospel of peace," "*not* peace, but a sword." That was not what the angels were looking at in the face of the babe in Bethlehem on the night of the birth of Jesus. And that was not in the heart of Him who, risen from the dead, bade them carry His gospel into all the world. With both, what linked itself with "Glory to God in the highest," was "on earth, peace."

But there is yet more than this the angels say. For upon the foundation of "God glorified," there can be built as I have said, much more than "peace on earth," blessed as indeed that is. But here the language of our English version fails to convey the full truth of this third thing in the angels' words. "Good will toward men," would be a very feeble conclusion, to say the least, to what began with "Glory to God in the highest," and that wrought out in the "obedience unto death" of the incarnate Son of God. Surely they who looked with unjealous wonder on Him before whom they veiled their faces, veiling Himself in human flesh,—saw more in it than simply "good will." Yea, it was "good pleasure,"—"delight in men," they saw and proclaimed. The self-same word is used as where the Father gave that testimony once before noted, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased;" or as some have put it, "in whom I have found my delight." (Matth. iv. 17.) The strongest expression is the best, we all feel, to convey to us the fulness of the Divine approbation there.

And with "the *man*, Christ Jesus," before us as the proof and justification of it, what language can be too strong to express what was in the heart of Him, who had "sent Him into the world" *for* man, and now found in Him, as man, its worthy object?

Nay, of old it had been said by Him who was Eternal Wisdom, "My delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 31.) Now it was fully manifest; and for us, who can look up and see the Son of God sitting upon the Father's throne, what depths of wonder and of joy are in the knowledge that *He* is still, and for evermore, a *man*, who sits there!

Yes, in the nearest and most intimate relationship to the Divine, that can be, is our human nature. The Son of the Father is also man. And in manhood taken, not before man fell, but long, long after—bridging over thus the awful gap and distance of the fall, not indeed by incarnation merely, but by that "offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all," which was in the forefront of the will of God, which he had come to do. (Heb. x.)

The "corn of wheat" must "fall into the ground and die," or it would "abide alone." (John xii. 24.) This side of His atoning death there could be no union between the second man, the Lord from Heaven, and the children of the fallen "first man." But that point of lowest suffering reached, it is a *righteous* thing with God to give a place "*in* Christ," linked for ever with Him, to those for whom He underwent the suffering of the Cross. "We," who believe, are thus "made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) God is righteous in putting Him in highest glory, who glorified Him in the endurance of the penalty of sin, that you and I might be saved. But then He is righteous too, in giving the saved ones, for whom He bore that penalty, a place in Him who bore it for them.



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He has linked Himself with them, and they are indissolubly henceforth so linked by God. They are "in Christ," and "there is no condemnation for them which are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) Divine love is perfected with them,\* casting out fear that they may have boldness in the day of judgment, because AS HE IS, so are they in this world. (1 John iv. 17, 18.) Yea, they are "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6), and therefore loved as He is loved, as the glory in which they will appear with Him, will one day bear witness to the world. (John xvii. 23.) These are God's thoughts towards us, and God's sayings to us, beloved reader; what do they witness of, but indeed what the angels speak of, the Divine "delight in men?"

To come closer home, what a thing to realize, resting on us, on you and me, beloved, that favour, that delight which rested and rests upon God's Holy One, God's dear Son! We must get our thoughts on Him entirely, and away from our own doings or thinkings altogether, in order to apprehend *that*. We must be simple in the faith that He who stood for us, there were none other could, bearing our burden of sin upon the Cross, stands for us still, our Representative, in glory. God's eye is upon Him whom the angels saw, when they spoke of His "delight in men." Let our eye be fully and fairly upon Him, and all will be plain. Then,—oh then, reader—what a song of praise from heart, in life, should be ours, to whom it is given to enter, more than angels can, into their own theme that day of the Lord's birth—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men."

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If we were perfectly humble we should not need humbling; but we do, all of us, even Paul, who had a thorn in the flesh to keep it down.

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\*As the margin reads. It is not *our* love, but God's towards us, as the connection proves.

## JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS.

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AND *is* a man, then, justified by works? Scripture is clear enough in the matter. It decides positively that he is: "Ye see then how that by *works* a man is justified and not by faith only." (Jas. ii. 24.) That is a perfectly sufficient answer to the question, *so far as the question goes*. And a great mass of even Scripture readers are content to leave it there. With light thoughts about sin, and no proper knowledge of themselves, they are content to believe the matter settled. They have never perhaps really faced the question as to whether they could meet God in the day of judgment on that ground. Or have they made the fatal mistake of mixing up God's mercy with His justice *in that day*, when the day of mercy will be over. Thus persuading themselves that God will "not be extreme to mark what we have done amiss," they suppose it will not be so hard to find these justifying works and to pass the easy trial. "They have never wronged their neighbours (is their thought); they have lived respectably, have given to the poor, have gone to church, and perhaps to sacrament. If it went hard with *them*, it would go hard with a great many more." So they are persuaded that if people can't be saved *by* their works, at any rate they can't be saved *without* them, and think it a dreadful thing to say that "just faith alone" will save anybody.

But another class of readers are in real and deep perplexity. They have begun to find out what sin is and what they are; have made perhaps many serious efforts to be better; have found themselves as well "without strength" (Rom. v. 6) as "ungodly;" have learned that God is holy as well as merciful; and cannot think of "the day when God shall judge the secrets of men" so easily. *They* would fain *believe* "in Him that justifieth

the ungodly," even "him that worketh *not*," (Rom. iv. 5) through the sufficient work of One who "*died* for the ungodly." But the question of the day of judgment remains yet a dark cloud upon their hearts. Are men to be justified by works *then*? If so, with a heart "deceitful above all things," suppose they do their best, how can they be sure it will be accepted? May not God have other thoughts than theirs?

But both these classes of people, very far apart otherwise, have introduced really into the question with which we begin this paper, two things which make it entirely different from the simple one, "Is a man justified by works?" To *that* question there can be but one answer, that the Apostle James says, he *is*. People add to this, in their own thoughts, "Is a man justified by works *in the day of judgment*?" Now that is a wholly different thing; and from not attending to the difference the most serious results follow. Souls are darkened, perplexity and confusion introduced into the Word of God, self-righteousness built up, and often whole systems of error founded as in this case, upon what is really at bottom inattention to what the Scripture does say. It is well known that Luther,—man of God as he was,—ventured to pronounce the epistle of James "an epistle of straw," because he thought it contradicted Paul's doctrine of "righteousness without works." Others have more commonly, on the other hand, taken the words of James, as meant to guard against taking the words of Paul in the full extent of their plain meaning. But in reality both Scriptures are plain, and as far as possible from contradicting one another.

The simple truth is that to introduce "the judgment-day" into this passage in James is just to bring in all the perplexity for which we would make the inspired writer responsible. *He is not speaking of it.* Was Abraham's justification by works "in the day of judgment?"

Clearly not, but as James says,—“*when* he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar.” (ii. 21.) Or again, was “Rahab the harlot justified by works” in the day of judgment? Nay, but “*when* she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way” (verse 25). Plainly this justification by works, then, that he speaks of, is *in this life*, and not in the future one at all.

But there is still another thing which we have introduced into this text in James, and which is not in it. Let us see if Paul’s statement as to this very Abraham, taken up by him to shew that men are justified by faith without works, is not just as clear, and just as free from contradicting the doctrine of the Apostle here, as need be. We shall find that it is rather Paul that guards from any misconception of what he says, than James for him. This then is his doctrine:—“For if Abraham were justified by works”—which James says he was,—“he hath whereof to glory.” And then, what? Does he say Abraham was *not* so justified? That would be indeed to contradict what James says; but there is no fear of Scripture doing this. No, but *he* guards us from misapprehending both himself and James. If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; *but not before God.*” (Rom. iv. 2.)

That is the whole matter. Now does James say that we are, or that Abraham was, justified by works *before God*? If he did, *he* would contradict Paul, but he says no such thing. He *does* say, what God forbid one should seek to lessen the force of, that the faith which saves is a living faith, not a dead one, and therefore *does* produce works. And then he tells us that we must *shew to others* that we have this living faith by our works. “A man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works: shew *me* thy faith without thy works”—it is impossible,—“and I will shew *thee* my faith *by* my works” (verse 18).

## WHEN WILL JESUS COME AGAIN?

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There is no other way. Men must be justified by works *before men* (he never says, before God) and not by faith only. So was Abraham, when he offered up Isaac. *We see* then "the Scripture fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God." It was plain he *did* believe God, when he gave that proof of it. But God had seen that faith and "counted it to him for righteousness" before Isaac was born. *God* did not wait to justify him till He saw the works. *He* could see the faith man could not see.

And finally, James does not teach us we must see our *own* works to know that we have faith. Faith is in Christ, not self. I might say, I believe I have faith, and be mistaken; and many a poor soul is in darkness, looking into himself to see if his faith is of the right kind. I am to trust Jesus, not my faith, or anything in which my poor heart can deceive me. Jesus died for sinners, that is sure. I am one, that is *as* sure. Then and as that, I am made fully welcome to Him.

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 WHEN WILL JESUS COME AGAIN?

It is strange, when one begins to talk of the Lord's coming, to have to tell people in what sense we use those words. The Bible certainly knows of but one sense anywhere, that of a real and *personal* coming. Of a first and a second coming, no doubt, it speaks, but the one just as real and literal as the other. I refer of course to the coming of the Lord Jesus. I do not at all dispute that in the Old Testament—I am acquainted with no instance in the New—the Lord, that is, Jehovah,\* is said to "come" in providential judgment upon various

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\* It is well known that where "Lord" is the translation of "Jehovah," it will be found in small capitals, "LORD," in our English Bibles.

lands. This, no doubt, is what has led to the idea of a providential coming of the Lord Jesus. But the two things are widely different. Jehovah, or God as such, is said to fill heaven and earth, thus to be present everywhere, and His coming is, perhaps in every case, a figure for His *making known* that presence, which man is blind to, till some mighty act reveals it. On the other hand the coming of *Jesus*, of the "Son of man," of Christ, and His "appearing," or "revelation,"—the most frequent terms used in the New Testament,—imply not simply His coming as a Divine Being (which He surely is,) but His coming as a man, "the *man*, Christ Jesus." These are names which belong to Him as man. It is the same truth which the angels' words expressed more fully to those who witnessed His ascension: "this *same* Jesus shall come again, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."—(Acts i. 11.)

As to the interpretation of the Lord's coming as death, no single Scripture even *seems* to justify it. The disciples on the contrary had quite other thoughts plainly, when, in consequence of our Lord's saying as to John, "If I will that he tarry till I come," it went abroad among them, "that that disciple should *not* die." And indeed it would have been a strange thing to have said or meant, "that that disciple should tarry till he died," which, if the Lord's coming means death, would have been what was actually said.

Nor is there another Scripture that will bear this interpretation any better. The one most applied in this way, and made even the text of many a sermon on the shortness and uncertainty of human life, is just as plainly misapplied as every other. The exhortation to "watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Mat. xxiv. 42), is taken from the midst of a prophecy two chapters long (xxiv., xxv.), which explains in the most complete way what is meant by the "com-

ing" there spoken of. And nothing but what I am compelled to call the most careless reading of Scripture can account for such misapplication.

It is no better as an argument to say, as so many do, "Well, at any rate, death will be the coming of the Lord to *me*." Are we wise enough to correct Scripture in that way? or to judge what would be a proper equivalent, or rather a good substitution for what it *does* say? It speaks of death, and it speaks of the Lord's coming, and never confounds the one with the other. Are we able to say one is as good as the other, and then really make that a plea for dropping out what it does say, and putting our own fancies in its place?

The chapters just referred to, as I have already said, give us too complete an explanation of what the coming of the Lord is, for which we are exhorted to watch, to allow of any mistake about it. Few I suppose would venture to assert that within the compass of a most connected prophecy we should find two or three different "comings" brought before us. No one need doubt, if he simply reads the chapters through with care, that but one is to be found. And that one is as far as possible from being death or a providential judgment. Let us put together what these two chapters give us as to it, excluding all doubtful points, and see.

The question of the disciples comes up first: "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world (or age)." Connected together in their minds, no doubt, the time of the temple being thrown down, to which they refer in the question "when shall these things be?" need not be the time of the Lord's coming. We shall find in the answer to these questions, that it could not be.

Notice, then, all through this answer, it is spoken of as "the coming of the Son of *man*," a very different thing from a providential one. Moreover it was to be

no secret, no disputable matter, of which they could say, Lo, here is Christ, or there, but "as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be." Then, it was to be a "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," and all the tribes of the earth should see it and mourn, and He should "send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet to gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." A little after it is compared to the world-wide destruction of the wicked by the flood. Then we are told, in parables, of the faithful and wise servant made ruler over His Master's goods, and of the evil servant cut asunder and his portion given with hypocrites, both at this "coming." Then of a company of virgins, some with oil in their lamps and others not; of the wise, thus ready, going in with the Bridegroom to the marriage,—of the rest, the unprovided foolish ones, shut out. Then once more of the judgment of the faithful and unfaithful. All these at the same "coming." And finally we pass again from parable to literal plain speech, and the first words that meet us are, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." And this judgment ends with: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

Now, difficulties as to certain points there may be; but is there any difficulty, or should there be, as to whether this is a real and personal coming of the Lord that is before us, or not? The prophecy is most complete and connected, it is plain, throughout. If it is not the coming of the Lord to the judgment of the whole earth, then farewell to any proper understanding of the



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Word of God. If all this is but high flown language for the destruction of Jerusalem, or anything else but what is so plain upon the face of it, then the blessed Word of God is—nay, I will not give utterance to the thought which that suggests.

But then, what about the question at the head of this paper? Does any one repeat with anxiety or with joyful interest the enquiry of the disciples, "*When shall these things be?*" The answer furnished by the chapters before us—full of deepest significance to sinner and to saint, is this, and nought but this: "**WATCH.**" "*Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*" "*Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.*"

O Lord, even now arouse all who read this, whether saved or unsaved, to take heed unto Thy words!

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MATTHEW VI. 29-34.

THE remedy for care which the Lord proposes to His people in these verses is a twofold one. And we must take the two parts together. The failure which so many Christians—for I speak only to such now, no other person *ought* to be free from care, because Christ gives rest to those who have come to Him alone—the failure, then, that so many Christians experience as to this, is because they disjoin what the Lord has joined together.

Are there not some who read this, who have found Christ, and to whom His blood has spoken peace as far as their *consciences* are concerned,—whose hearts nevertheless have a burden of care that prevents true and proper "*rest?*" Why is it, beloved? Ought not the one that has known Jesus to have found in Him a remedy as much for *care* as for *fear*? for *restlessness* as for *guilt*?

for the troubles of this life as well as for the judgment to come? Surely it ought to be so. And why is it not? The answer I have already given. People would, with strange and wilful disregard of the Lord's words, talk of their *circumstances*, as if *they* furnished the answer,—as if it were impossible for the Lord Himself to keep heart and mind at rest in the midst of their own peculiar surroundings! But what unbelief is shown in this, and what dishonour is done to Him by it! Whereas all the difficulties and trials of the way are but really the occasions for the display of the unfailing resources and the unchanging grace of Him who unwearyingly watches over and cares for His own.

And here is just the first thing to consider. He *does* care. The love that gave Jesus up for us upon the cross, is not exhausted even by that, but just *proved inexhaustible*. "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered *Him* up for us all, how shall He not, with *Him* also, freely give us *all* things?" Yes, says this blessed Exponent of His Father's heart, "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." What you would not care to do for yourselves, He has done; yea, what you scarcely care to *have* done for you, He has done! Oh to realize in its full power that wondrous and sweet assurance! Do *we* think of the hairs that fall from our head? *He does*. Well, if Almighty Love cares thus for me, what a remedy for care on *my* part. Why should I be uneasy, I who with all my taking thought can never add one cubit to my stature nor even make one hair white or black? Blessed be His name, He who has given me a place before Himself in all the value and beauty of His own blessed Son, has so dearly bought Himself title to pour out His love on me, that surely He must delight to do it. And I, so blessed and cared for, how should I wrong Him, my Father and my God, by a single doubt as to the result.

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Thus the soul enters into its rest. It is the real healing of the breach in Eden, the real "escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter i. 4.) For what is "lust," but the heart of man, away from its only place of rest in the unquestioning consciousness of the goodness and love of God, seeking its own things, because it must care for itself, if none care for it! Thus our Lord's words rebuke our distrustful care about what to eat and drink and to be clothed with; "for after these things do the *Gentiles* seek." Are we to be still "even as the nations who know not God?"

But there is another thing connected with this. I believe many a soul would say, "Well, I know all this; but still, somehow it has not its proper power with me at all. I know it is foolish and wrong, and yet I *am* anxious and troubled for all that." Now then, beloved, suffer a plain, straightforward question: are *you* "seeking FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness?" Are you, truthfully and honestly, out and out for God and His glory? That is the indispensable *other* ingredient in this remedy for care. God has been saying to you, His saved one, "*I will take care for you, I will leave you without the need of one single uneasy thought; I will attend to all that concerns your interests; and I give you the privilege of undistracted occupation with your own things above, and with my interests below.*"

You want "purpose of heart" in this, or you cannot know what freedom from care is. Can you think that He who says that "all that is in the world is not of" Him, will give you help to *enjoy* the world? If you are bent upon making money, or upon "getting on" in the world in any way, you know you cannot count upon Him to be with you in it. Hence anxiety and care come in at once. And what wonder? Of course all the assurances of a love even as infinite as His are thrown away upon you, while you are not seeking to live to Him, but to yourself.

And you are weary. You have a restless, because a *divided* heart. Your worldly plans do not give satisfaction, but a bad conscience. And when you would turn to God, you find little satisfaction either, because you *have* a bad conscience. You are wasting your few moments here, heaping up sorrow for yourself under the sure government of One who has already assured us that "he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." There may not be anything outwardly evil in your life, but the question is, what is it that your heart really turns to for its proper joy? can you ask God Himself, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" and can you say to Him, "and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee?" Are you willing to have Him, His word, "search and try you, and see well if there be any way of wickedness in you?" It may be, but as you would say, some "little thing;" but you may let Satan cheat you out of all your proper rest and joy by just "*some little thing.*"

"There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."—(Psalms iv. 6, 7.)

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## KEY-NOTES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

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It may be new to some of our readers that each book of Scripture has its own subject—its own *line* of truth, in which it differs from every other. The following headings are designed to help those who study for themselves the Word of God, to lay hold of these characteristic differences. The "Scripture-Outlines" which follow this paper are intended to bring out more distinctly and in more detail the same thing. Both will be *so far* of

## KEY-NOTES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS. 21.

service to any as they are content to examine the Word patiently and prayerfully in connection with what is here brought forward. The Lord guide and bless.

MATTHEW gives us the Lord as "Son of David," king of Israel, offering Himself as such to them, and rejected, and then as "Son of Abraham" (ch. i. 1) bringing in blessing for the Gentiles on the principle of faith. Yet is He king of the Jews to the last, and brings in blessing for them in days yet to come, as such.

In His work He is looked at as the "Sin-offering" of Lev. iv., enduring the whole wrath of God upon sin, as a victim "burned without the camp."

MARK gives us the Son of God as a *Servant*, ministering to man's need, and glorifying God in the path of perfect subjection and obedience.

In His work, therefore, as the Trespass-offering (as Lev. v. 14—vi. 7) making up all the *injury* that sin had done to God and man, so as to overpay both.

LUKE gives us the Lord as perfect *man*, in connection with man as such, whether Jew or Gentile. And in His work as the "Peace-offering" (Lev. iii. and vii. 11-21) putting God and man at one. "Salvation," "Saviour," "peace," (in the gospel sense), and "grace," appear here for the first time in the Gospel. The parables of the lost sheep, lost piece of money, prodigal son, of the good Samaritan, &c., show this character. And on the Cross there is no cry of being forsaken, but the cry of "Father," the prayer for forgiveness of His enemies, and the salvation of the thief.

JOHN on the other hand gives us the Deity of Christ. As made flesh He is "the light of the world," (for "God is light," Jno. i. 5.) Life is in Him, and He gives it (ch. v.) Thus in this gospel only you have "new-birth" plainly spoken of, (ch. i. 13 and iii.) He is all through outside Judaism, for man is dead and law cannot give him life, (the truth in ch. v.)

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As to His sacrificial work, He is the Burnt-offering, (Lev. i.), "cut into its pieces" to show its perfectness, and all going up to God upon the altar as a sweet smell. So here the Lord gives His testimony to the perfection of His work, (ch. xvii. 4 and xix. 30.)

THE ACTS gives us the beginning of the Christian Church at Pentecost, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and its gradual shifting from Jewish to Gentile ground; yet its chief Apostle closing his history in a prison at Rome; though "the word of God is not bound."

I give the epistles in a different order from that in our Bibles, simply for convenience of comparison.

ROMANS gives us first the great question of *righteousness*. The apostle first shews, that man has none for God, and law does not help, but condemns him, (ch. i. —iii. 20.) Then, that God in the gospel declares *His* righteousness in justifying sinners through the blood of Jesus (iii. 21-31) by faith only, God's principle long before shewn in Abraham (ch. iv.); and the blessed position of one so justified (ch. v. 1-2.)

This is the first part. The second part shews the believer's place in righteousness before God in Christ risen, all the value of Christ attaching to him; and together with this, how righteousness is wrought out in the believer by his deliverance through Christ's death (he having, for God and for faith, died *with* Christ) from sin (chap. vi.) and from law (ch. vii.); and walking in the power of the Spirit as one with Christ. (ch. viii.)

Ch. ix.-xi. complete the doctrine of the epistle by showing that the promises to the Jews are not inconsistent with this principle of grace, but on the contrary it is the only way of blessing for them also. And that the Gentile church, looked at *as a professing body*, stood no less upon the ground of responsibility than Israel, and would be cut off *as such* if they failed. (ch. xi.) This is no question of the salvation of the soul. Exhortations close the epistle.

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GALATIANS gives us the contrast between Judaism and Christianity in their distinguishing principles of law and grace. The law was "the elements of the world," took up men upon their own ground, tried them, and left them under curse. God's children were in bondage under it. It was not God's principle from the beginning, but only came in as a schoolmaster, 430 years after God had "preached the gospel unto Abraham" (so that the gospel is older than the law) in a promise which secured blessing to all nations on the principle of faith. This covenant of God no law coming in afterwards could set aside or add to; it was only a schoolmaster, "till the seed (Christ) should come."

On the other hand, grace alone justified, gave liberty to the soul, and power over sin; a place moreover crucified to the *world* by the cross of Christ, and a "rule" for walk, not as circumcised or uncircumcised (Jew or Gentile) but as in Christ, a new sort of creature.\* (chap. vi. 14, 15.)

COLOSSIANS carries us a step further. The believer is looked at as "*risen* with Christ," which had only been implied before, not dwelt upon. He is seen too as "the Head of the body, the church;" our hope is shewn as "laid up in heaven," "our life hid with Christ in God," our affections to be above where He is.

In order to this all His glories are set before us: One in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and in whom we are complete. His blood reconciles not only earthly but heavenly things. He is the beginning of a new creation in His own person. We have passed out of the world, the old creation, by His death, all trespasses forgiven, and have put off the body of the flesh. We are risen, and our life hid with Him in God, and when He appears, we shall appear with Him in glory.

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\*The Greek word for "new" here means "new in kind."

The practical effect is, having put on the new man, renewed in knowledge after the image of God, Christ is all, and *in* all,—filling the whole scene.

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## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

### 1. THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

THE subject of the Epistle to the Romans, speaking generally, is "RIGHTEOUSNESS:"—not alone how as a sinner I can be justified or counted righteous, and how *God* is righteous in doing this, but also how practical righteousness is wrought out in me,—how I am made to "bring forth fruit unto God."

The first few verses, ch. i. 1-17, are introductory. They give us, as the opening verses of these Bible books mostly do, the character of the epistle in a few words. From them we learn that these Roman saints, destitute, or nearly so, of New Testament Scripture, and having never seen the Apostle, he was anxious to establish them in the faith that they already professed, and for that purpose to declare to them (authoritatively as an Apostle could) that gospel to which he had been set apart. He was not ashamed of it. It was the power of God to save those that believed; not only from wrath and curse, but, as we shall see, from sin also. It was this, because "to faith" the righteousness of God,—the very thing man as a sinner dreaded,—was revealed *in* what was "*gospel*" (good news) to him, requiring only faith on his part to receive it.\*

The body of the epistle begins with verse 18: God's wrath revealed from heaven against all ungodliness of

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\* "*From faith*," (verse 16) means "on the principle of faith." Wherever there was faith, not only God's righteousness was revealed in good news to it, but the one who had it got part in all the blessedness it spoke of.



men—that was, as a class, the Gentiles,—and on the other hand against the unrighteousness of those who, having the truth, held it without practical effect,—as a class, Israel. The Gentiles are now first taken up (19–ii. 16). They had turned away from the God that even nature spoke of to them, and had been given up to violate nature shamefully among themselves. Their sins were manifest even to themselves, although they loved them. Their philosophers (ii. 1-5) were no better; they did the very things they judged. In God's judgment-day what men had *done* alone would be the question. And there is added for the conscience of the Jew, that Jew and Gentile would then stand before One who was no respecter of persons; and if *hearing* the law were not enough, but men must be justified by *doing*, it was possible that the Gentile who had no law might after all condemn the Jew that had. Not that any *could* be justified by doing; that is presently denied (iii. 20), and the very thing the Apostle is about is proving all to be together guilty.

He now turns (17) directly to the Jew. *He* was one—resting in the law, as given to him alone, and boasting of his knowledge of God and of His will. What was he in reality? Worse than the heathen philosophers, the law he had he broke, and made the name of the God he boasted in to be blasphemed on his account among the Gentiles. What would the outward form of circumcision profit, with the heart uncircumcised within? (17-29.)

And this was not the denial of the Jews' privileges; they had above all the word of God confided to them; and if they had not been faithful to their trust, that did not set aside His faithfulness. Nay, man's unrighteousness would commend the righteousness of God, and man's lie His truth. Yet that did not take away the justice of His judging (iii. 1-8).

As for the Jew, already proved under sin just as the Gentile, his law had already explicitly declared that none was righteous, none did good ; and it was to those under law it spoke. Thus, if the Gentile's sins were manifest, the law itself spoke to the Jew who was under it, that *every* mouth might be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. By deeds of law, therefore,—and this includes all possible good deeds upon man's part,—no flesh can be justified (or counted righteous) in the sight of God ; for by the law is the knowledge of *sin*. (iii. 9-20.)

Man having in this way no righteousness for God, God manifests *His own* for man. Not in the law, but “without,” or apart from “law” altogether, although both law and prophets bear witness to it. If it had been in the law it would have been in judgment of all, but in the gospel, and declared by the atoning blood of Christ (25), it is “unto” or “for all ;” as to them that believe, “upon all” (22) : justifying them freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (24). Thus the blood of Christ declares as to the past God's righteousness in passing over the sins of bygone generations ; and for the present time, that He is righteous in justifying the believer in Jesus (25, 26).

By this means man's boasting is excluded ; and he being cast as a sinner entirely upon God's grace, the Gentile could not be shut out from blessing, for was He not the God of the Gentiles also ? Yet law was not made void but established (29-31), for its true power was in conviction of sin, not sparing it or the doer of it, (see again v. 19).

Moreover, Abraham's case (for the Jew traced all he had to Abraham), was not an exception to this principle of grace. *He* could not boast. What was counted to him for righteousness was not work, but that “he believed God,”—the same way in which God justified the ungodly now (iv. 1-5).

David, too, described the blessedness of him, not who did no sin, but to whom the Lord *did not reckon* it, thus reckoning righteousness without works (6-8).

Moreover, as to Abraham, it was not when a circumcised man that he was thus reckoned righteous, but when *uncircumcised*—in short, a Gentile. And circumcision was given him as the seal of the faith he had while in that condition. How vain to bring it up then, to exclude the Gentiles from Abraham's blessing! (9-12). So also the promise of inheritance was not by *law*, (which came long after Abraham). Had it been, it would not have been believing that God put His seal upon, but doing—*faith* would have been made void; and besides, *none* would have got the promise, for law works only wrath, as we have seen (13-15). Faith then is God's principle, grace making the promise sure to *all* the seed, and that seed is, therefore, all believers: Abraham "father of *us* all"—"of *many* nations." Such he was "before Him whom he believed, even God," whose way is to display His power in man's extremity by giving life to the dead, (spiritually or naturally), and who speaks of things not [yet] existing as if they were already in being (16, 17).

The faith of Abraham is now brought forward therefore as the pattern of our own. *He* had to believe in a God of resurrection, who came in, as it were to give new life, his body being now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, that he might have the promised seed. He took God's word for this, looked not in at himself, but out at the promise, and *therefore* it was reckoned to him for righteousness, (18-22). *We* are called to believe in the self-same simple manner on One who has not indeed given us a *promise*, but who as the God of resurrection has *acted* for us in raising up for our justification—to show His acceptance of the work done in our behalf—Him who was delivered for our offences. (23-25.)

A blessed picture follows of the consequences of our justification (ch v. 1-11). Peace with God,—a present standing in His grace,—as to the future, that glory of God from which once we were shut out, in such unclouded prospect before the soul, that all the clouds by the way are lit up by it. We rejoice in tribulations themselves, which in God's hand prove blessing to us; that love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us—that love He has commended to us in the gift of Christ for us, when *yet* we were sinners, ungodly and without strength (5-8). This love assures us of no wrath being in the future for us (9); for, when our hearts were at enmity to Him, the death of His Son reconciled us; and much more then shall we, so reconciled, be saved by Him who now in the presence of God for us in glory, lives to effect the complete and final salvation of those for whom He died. (Comp. Heb. vii. 25.)

One last thing remains to perfect the picture of our blessedness; and it is indeed the climax of the whole. The heart is brought back from its wandering to the place of rest, the only possible place of rest and joy: "and not only so, but we also *joy in God* through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation" (11, *margin*). We see how this connects the being *counted* righteous with the working out of righteousness in the soul. The prodigal with his Father on his neck, gets not only the son's *place* but the son's *heart*.

This closes the first part of the Epistle.

[*To be continued, if the Lord will.*]

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THE Bride may have all sorts of precious things, but she herself is for the Lord.

## "YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN."

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THE more important a truth is in its place, the more serious will be found the consequences of having it *out* of its place—of a misuse of it. Few things could more sadly illustrate this than the many misapplications of our Lord's words here.

The misapplication of the words to water-baptism rises up in our minds naturally first. But I do not dwell upon this now. I would only remind my readers that the apostle Peter sets aside all possibility of such an application, where he tells us plainly how new birth does come: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. . . . And this," he adds, "is the word which *by the gospel* is preached unto you." (1 P. i. 23-25). Clearly then, if new birth come by the *gospel*, it does not come by baptism, except there be two new births.

But the real meaning of that expression, "born of water," is far otherwise, and refers to a well-known prophecy, which Nicodemus ought to have understood, and which announces Israel's conversion to God, yet to be fulfilled. "Then will I sprinkle clean **WATER** upon you, and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you. . . and I will put my **SPIRIT** within you." (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27). Should not a master in Israel have understood this reference; the cleansing power of water being often thus used as a figure of what the Word of God effects in like manner for the soul, or as Eph. v. 26 puts the two together, "the washing of water *by the word*?"

This, then, is the real spiritual necessity everywhere: a thing not to be wrought by "the will of man," as

water-baptism may be, but by the Word of God, when joined with the power of that Spirit, whose picture is the "wind, blowing where it listeth," (Jno. iii. 8.) Even thus, reader, if *you* are to enter the kingdom of God, **MUST** *you* be born again.

A terribly solemn sentence upon man it is. All that comes of him without this is worse than nought; that which is born of the flesh, flesh, and only flesh. No difference; no exception. No abatement of the sentence in any case whatever. Moral and immoral,—just and unjust,—hard and benevolent,—the sweetest and fairest child of nature equally with the vilest and the worst,—all, all are pronounced on here. All alike unfit for God. All alike helpless and hopeless in themselves. "*Ye must be born again.*" "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," (Jno. i. 13).

This is a solemn, momentous truth. It cannot be, as truth, too strongly maintained or too earnestly insisted on. Still it may be used out of place, and become when so used, potent for harm rather than good. And it does become so when it is used to cast souls off their resting-place in Christ, and turn them in upon themselves for evidences of new birth instead. "*Ye must be born again*" is simple, solemn truth for every child of man, no doubt. It is not "gospel." There is no "good news" in the very saddest thing that can be said about man. To set it before souls as if it were the way of salvation, and so keep them with their eyes upon themselves, striving and praying and looking for a "change of heart," is unscriptural and wrong. Our Lord's use of it with Nicodemus was very far from this. With him,—a "man of the Pharisees"—this solemn utterance was no opening the door of salvation to a convicted sinner; nor do we hear of it as ever announced to such at all. No, but it was rather the door *shut* in the face

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of self-righteousness, the axe at the root of the stately Pharisaic pride. If "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," then what for Nicodemus was all his painstaking religiousness? What for you, reader, if you are not born again, all *your* doings, resolutions, strivings, prayers? Alas, do they satisfy yourself even? Do they give rest and peace? With many perhaps, you talk of making your peace with God: is it *made*? or, when will it be?

I surely believe that all such questions have their place, and are most needed. Just as we need to plough up the land to prepare it for the harvest. Still, if that were all, little harvest there would be. Even so, plough up the heart, all well. But mark you, the gospel is the seed prepared of God to cast into the furrows, and upon *that alone* all fruit will grow.

Once again, then, *how* are men "born again?" "By the Word of God." And what word? That "which by the *gospel* is preached unto you." Is what *I* must be, the burden of the gospel? No, most surely: "the gospel of God"—His "good news"—is "concerning His Son, Jesus Christ" (Rom. i. 3). Here then the voice of God breaks in, and bids me part company with myself; my ears are turned away from listening to the beating of my own poor heart. Blessed be God, if I have but sorrow and need and sin, He has a word for me,—a word for sinners *as* such, which, dropped in the stirred up depths of the heart, brings with it life and peace and salvation. As I listen, my soul is rapt out of itself. The glories, the virtues, the sufferings of Another occupy me. All having reference to *me*, to my need, to my sorrow, to my guilt,—supposing nothing else whatever in me, but lifting me out of all by the knowledge of grace and love come down to me the sinner, through the self-sacrifice of Him who died for sinners.

I have to find no evidences of new birth in me to find

all this apply to me. Just as one of a world of sinners, no different in any way, to me it all applies:—in no wise to any good in me. That death,—that awful death which the gospel preaches to me,—that lonely cross, with the pall of darkness over it, out of which, startling the night, breaks that one cry of utter desolation—that being “made sin,” of Him who knew no sin,—for whom was this, and to whom does this apply? Why to sinners, plainly. So it is everywhere said. And what sort of people are “sinners,” beloved reader? People with good lives or bad? with soft hearts or hard? Well, then, I have not to find in myself the evidences of saintship, but of sinnership, and not good but bad works, not godliness but *ungodliness*, to know that He who “when we were yet without strength, died for the ungodly”—died for *me*. All that goes to make me out fully a sinner, goes to establish my title to a death which was died for sinners. And if I am “without strength” either to be otherwise, *He* has strength to save me. “He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.” And I am bidden to “take freely” this “water of life,” which flows from the riven Rock for me—for all. I know I am bad enough, helpless enough to need Him. I know He bids all welcome. Just as I am, I take His word, and trust His grace. What assurance want I more than that the Word says, “Blessed are ALL they that put their trust in Him?”

But, you say perhaps, are we not to know then that we are born again? Surely, yes. The thing is to know it in a surer way than by trusting the experiences, evidences, and feelings of the heart about it. That is the high road to doubt, and not to peace. “The heart is deceitful above all things. . . . who can know it?” But, you think, *that* applies to the natural heart merely, and if you are born again that will not be true. Well, but is not that the very thing you want to ascertain?



## "YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN."

33.

and you would go to a deceitful heart to ask if it be changed! Beloved reader, the caution of the inspired Word is a solemn one: "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." On the other hand, that Word itself furnishes me with the only solid ground for faith as to my acceptance, without the need of finding in myself any one thing that separates me from the world of sinners round. It assures me that "Jesus Christ the righteous," is "the propitiation for the whole world," (1 Jno. ii. 2). Upon that ground, I am welcome to come and rest in Him. That is enough. I *do* rest. Do you say, He may deny my claim? Not so: for "whoso cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out."

Thus am I born again: for we "are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 26.) Only let us once again remember that *faith's* look is an *outward* one. Faith is in *Him*, never in self, good or bad. Now, it is sure, that when I am simple in this faith in Him, it does bear fruit in me. Love shown *towards* me produces love *in* me. Joy and peace accompany the confidence of faith as surely as light comes with the sun. All the fruits of the Spirit come in the train of these. Yes, and we can say with the apostle, "We know we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." (1 Jno. iii. 14.) But then, that is the language of one who has got the consciousness first of all, of *having* brethren to love. It would be a poor thing to suppose that no feelings, no experiences, no Divine affections follow faith. They do surely: and it would be folly to say we are not conscious of them, or that they do not confirm and fortify the faith itself. But so much the more, that we may *have* the feelings, is it of importance to hold fast the foundation upon which we build not only for salvation, but for *peace*. Christ is our peace. (Eph. ii. 14.) Our "joy and peace" are "in believing," and not in experiences or in feeling;

and it is only as we keep to this that the feelings and experiences become right.

"Herein is love: *not* that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

"We love Him because He first loved us." (1 Jno. iv. 10, 11, 19.)

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"IS ANY MERRY."

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"Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Jas. v. 13.

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THERE are perhaps few simpler and more practical tests of the character and depth of what we may call "our religion," than our ability to enter into and realize the words before us. Do you "sing psalms" when you are "merry," dear reader? Does your heart in its seasons of fullest joy habitually and naturally turn to God thus, to utter it? If it be so indeed with you, happy are you! Your joy has in it the essential element of all true joy:—perpetuity. That joy *will last*. None other will.

Perhaps you will think this extreme and fanatical. But at least you must own, it is Bible fanaticism. The inspired writer,—that is, God by him,—does certainly enjoin upon the merry-hearted to sing psalms. Is it indeed a strange thing with you to go to God with your joy? Your *sorrow*, I suppose you would think it all right to take to Him; you can understand the beginning of this verse I am quoting: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." Well, is it quite unnatural, that He who is the best and surest Comforter in sorrow, should be the sharer also, and companion of our joy; of *all* our joy?

Alas, is the breach in Eden still so unhealed with you? Are you still so like that "elder son" in the parable, to whom music and dancing in the Father's house are such strange things, that he must call a servant and ask what it all means?

Perhaps you too, like him, are hard at work for Him you call your Father. Perhaps *you* are saying, with as good a conscience as he, "Lo, these many years do I serve Thee." Come now, honestly,—is there no *hardness* in the service? Are *you* never saying, like him, "And yet Thou never gavest me a kid that I might *make MERRY—with my friends*"?

It is very true, this hard working, pains-taking religion that so many have, too careful for the holiness of God to allow Him to kill a fatted calf for returned prodigals,—it does bring little joy, little brightness, little peace for the present, does it not, dear reader? Oh, what does your heart say to all this? You that say, you have to "keep the commandments" to "enter into life"—and can quote (as you think) Scripture for it,—but are *not* keeping them,—you that have to do the best you can to be saved, but, alas, are *not* doing it;—poor, careless professor, or sad and weary worker after a life which is "God's gift,"—will you not ask yourself even now, whether this is "peace with God" you have? whether this is the "rest" Christ gives to those who come to Him?

O I would I could assure you, that there *is* "music and dancing" in the Father's house; nay, that it is the only place where joy in its reality is to be found. You may never have known it, and yet none the less is it there. If it be not, tell me, O tell me, where is that home of joy? Can the world furnish better "mirth" than heaven? or the poor blighted earth than the One who fashioned its unfallen beauty? No, but the secret is, *you are unreconciled to Him, and thus you cannot*

understand Him nor His love. You "sing psalms," perhaps; but you are not "merry." Your religion is a sad and cheerless thing. You never did think certainly of singing psalms just because you were "merry." Perhaps you did it because you liked the tunes. Perhaps because it was part of the decent ceremonial by which you thought God would be propitiated; and at least for the time it pacified your conscience, and made you think you were not irreligious. No matter much why it was you did it. It was not "joy in God," as those joy, who "have received the reconciliation" (Rom. v. 12, *margin*). You do not joy in Him, because you have *not* received it.

Poor, wretched soul, thou art, whoever thou art. The rags of the "far country" are still upon thee! Knowest thou not, "all our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags?" But come, arise and come to thy Father! There is bread enough, and to spare, and thou art perishing with hunger. Take with thee words and return: say only, "I have sinned." He against whom have been all thy sins, "will in no wise cast thee out." The very enemies of Christ preach the gospel to thee, as they cry "This man receiveth sinners." "*This man.*" Yes, verily; and yet "God manifest in the flesh." He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. His own picture of *your* reception is: "his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

Oh, when you have heard for yourself God's own justification of His joy over *you*, "It was *meet* that we should make merry and be glad"—you, too, will find how meet it is to be merry, and what joy there is in His presence. It will no more be strange to you to carry your joy, as well as your sorrow to Him,—or when "merry," to "sing psalms."

## HOW TO "FIND WISDOM."

It is well, in a day when schools of theology, professing as they do, to derive their doctrines from the Word of God, produce tenets so many and diverse—a day too when pride of intellect calls many to worship at her shrine—it is well, I say, to enquire what is the key to the acquisition of the mind of God,—to *wisdom*.

That there are creeds many and conflicting is only too evident, that various and sometimes antagonistic denominations have been founded on these creeds is equally apparent, nor can it be denied that men, not merely of intelligence, but also of lives devoted to the subject, have failed to agree on points of truth in the Word of God. All this is beyond question to the attentive mind. But it is not my object now to show the ill results flowing from systems constructed on false creeds, but rather to discover the secret of the true apprehension and true exhibition in practice of the truth of God. And this is clearly of the last importance. To get upon rails which will secure the traveller to the journey's end, to possess a secret which will qualify the soul for the reception of the mind of God is indeed a boon, the most desirable. Let us thank God that such a secret may be possessed by all His children, and that when in possession of this secret, they are capacitated to receive the truth in its fulness.

At the same time, without this, the keenest mind, the clearest reason and the most acute intellect, even though sanctified, are incapable and helpless. It is not to the mind nor to the reason that God is pleased to make the communications of His word, but to faith in the renewed soul ; and, hence, if reason alone be allowed its play, conclusions, opposite to those of the word of God, may be expected. And yet even where faith exists, a prerequisite is needed to secure safety in the fuller appre-

hension of the will of God. Many beautiful instances are furnished by the Word of God of those who possessed and profited by *this* secret. Many had learned how to disown all pretension, all natural capability to the discovery of "that good and acceptable and perfect will of God," and the profit which they derived personally has been handed down to us for our profit likewise.

It is true that the secret of the Lord is with them that *fear Him*, (Ps. xxv. 14), and with them alone. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and without this fear of the Lord, this "trembling at His Word," this casting down imaginations and every high thing, this "becoming a fool so as to become wise," in short the total disallowance of the natural mind in its unbroken, unsubdued and wilful energies, there can be no attainment to the mind of God.

In view of this truth, it is extremely interesting to trace the history of those to whom it pleased God to communicate special and distinctive revelations of His blessed mind, and to see what it was in them that qualified them for so distinguished an honour—what fitted them to become the depositaries of the mind of God for the time being. I will note some of the most remarkable instances.

We find, in the Epistle of Jude, a prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam,—"*behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute Judgment on all.*" Far was the reach of the eye of this early prophet. It looked into the future beyond the flood, and the destruction of Jerusalem, right on to the coming of the Lord with His saints for judgment. No doubt he witnessed evil around him, and might have supposed the judgment of a holy God on that evil, yet, by what means could he have foreseen, that, when this judgment should be executed, the Judge should identify His saints with Himself in the exercise of it? How came he

to learn this? By what means came he into the possession of the secret? History informs us. In Gen. v. 22, we read, "Enoch walked with God." Therein lay the reason. Whatever may have been the conduct of those by whom he was surrounded, Enoch preserved that holy separation to God that he became acquainted with His intentions.

In the following chapter, Gen. vi., "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and Noah walked with God," as his forefather before. The world had in no wise improved. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man was only evil continually" until God could bear no longer. The deluge was purposed as an evidence of the government of God and His abhorrence of sin. But Noah was warned of this approaching judgment. He prepared an ark for himself and his household. Whatever may have been the indifference of those around him to the state of the world or to his own divinely appointed testimony—his preaching of righteousness, he himself was divinely apprised and prepared. But wherein lay the secret? Noah walked with God, and was therefore instructed by Him as to His purpose.

Again in the same book of Genesis another instance may be adduced, that of Abraham. It is exceedingly refreshing to the heart to trace the path of this faithful patriarch, to follow him from his country and his idolatrous surroundings, obedient to the call of God, pressing forward with a step that seldom staggered, and a faith that seldom wavered, in the enjoyment of unbroken communion with God, to a separate and solitary encampment in Hebron (communion) to become the vessel of rich unfoldings of the mind of God.

It was of him that the Lord said in Jno. viii. 56, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad." Visions of the displayed glory of Christ—the day of real earthly joy—the day of Christ, when Abra-

ham's seed should be blessed in Him, and, in company with that seed, all nations should rejoice. Such visions were made good to him, but on what ground? The eye of the prophet had been undimmed by the moral and blinding evaporations of the world. His path had been one of separation from that world in calm and peaceful fellowship with God, and hence his ability to see with clearness that far distant day of the glory of Immanuel.

Let me supply one more case from the Old Testament—a case which shines with all the more radiance because of the darkness of the back-ground. The people of God had been led captive by proud Nebuchadnezzar. Their sins had brought their thralldom upon them. Nevertheless although the nation had thus proved faithless, there was to be found, here and there, the energy of faithfulness to God in individuals. The victorious King of Babylon might boast of his universal dominion, and challenge the disobedience of any. Yet he had in his very capital some who would maintain their allegiance to God at their own risk rather than obey him and compromise the Word of God. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the King's meat." (ch. i. 8.) Happy resolution and fraught in its consequences with results as happy. Time rolled on. The King had dreams which troubled him and which could not find an interpretation from all the wise men of his kingdom. Daniel was called upon and furnished that explanation. Again, none could decipher the mysterious writing on the wall of the palace of gay and ribald Belshazzar, but Daniel supplied the need. Again, difficulties greater than these lay on his path. He had visions of his own—pictures of coming events which "turned his comeliness into corruption, and caused him to tremble," yet these pictures were the true and wonderfully exact delineations of Judgments or



blessings yet to be displayed. The same qualification for the reception of the divine purpose is to be found in him—profound and unfaltering obedience to God.

This principle holds good in later times, inasmuch as it is one of essential and unchanging importance, whatever may be the measure of light or the fulness of the revelation given, for "the fear of the Lord is clean *enduring for ever*." (Ps. xix. 9.) In the New Testament we have many beautiful instances of this fruitful fear of the Lord, only in a way more familiar and less formal according to the closer subsisting relationship. Take first of all Mary—sister of Martha. The earliest accounts of her are given as in Luke x. Her well-known characteristic was, that she "sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." Such a position implies surely that self had no place. Proper humility had taken the place of natural pride—and her ear was therefore open for the words of Jesus. Tracing her history, we find in Jno. xi., that when the Lord was on his way to Bethany to raise Lazarus, and when Martha had returned to the house consciously unequal to maintain communion with the Lord, Mary went to meet Him; and, though tears of natural and sisterly sorrow take their course, yet all is calm and dignified. The impossibility of raising Lazarus at once, did not enter her mind as it had that of Martha. Again, in the following chapter, we find Mary anointing with spikenard those feet where in earlier days she had found a seat. Her action was not understood by the disciples and met their disapprobation. But the Lord placed His own gracious interpretation upon it, and said, "against the day of my burying hath she kept this." Which of the disciples had realized the day of His burying?—None! Yet Mary had become possessor of the way of the Lord as none other. The secret was, because she had "sat at Jesus' feet."

Further—a deeply solemn moment had arrived. The

Lord and His disciples were seated at the table in the celebration of the last paschal supper. In the midst of their feast a deep cloud of sorrow crossed the heart of their Master. He was "troubled in spirit, and said, 'one of you shall betray Me.'" (Jno. xiii. 21.) The disciples doubted of whom He spoke. Who could be guilty of such a deed? One of them was in near and familiar proximity to Him,—John, "lying on Jesus' breast said unto Him, 'Lord, who is it?'" He was surely most qualified to gather the secret of the Lord, to hear the whisper of His lips! Even Peter referred to him, for like Martha, he had to acknowledge that moral nearness of heart is the only true means of acquiring the mind of the Lord. To John then was the communication made who should be the betrayer. And, to whom was that wondrous Revelation made, wherein the very Throne of heaven and the fearful catalogue of earthly judgments—the opening of seals, the pouring forth of vials, and the sounding of trumpets, are enrolled—to this same apostle who had reclined his head on the bosom of Jesus and who was fitted to receive such unfoldings. Lastly, I will produce the case of the Apostle Paul and refer to a statement made by him, by which we may discover the secret of that knowledge which placed him foremost among the Apostles, so that of him Peter writes of his epistles, that in them "are things hard to be understood," and that to him were accorded special communications, again and again; and in particular that "mystery (of the church) which in other ages had not been made known to the sons of men."—(Eph. iii. 2—4). The statement occurs in 2 Cor. x. 5, "Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." Here lay the secret! Perhaps few could boast of a more capacious, quick or well stored mind than he who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, yet now, in the school of God, he had learned

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to distrust that natural talent, to cast down the mere imaginations of his own mind—and had taken the place of a "fool" so as to become wise. Beautiful subordination of that in which man boasts the loudest, his own reason. Such an one is on the high road to the apprehension of "the deep things of God." Humbling, no doubt, it is to discover that what furnishes a thread to guide through the labyrinth of this life is in itself valueless in conducting through the mysteries of God. The fear of the Lord, seen practically in Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Daniel, Mary, John and Paul, and many others beside, is the only key, the only fitting qualification for the apprehension and retention of the mind of God.—  
 "What man is he that feareth the Lord, him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose." (Ps. xxv. 12.)

May God grant to His people "grace to serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear." May His saints cherish this "clean fear of the Lord" which "endureth for ever;"—may a deepened desire be granted them for the enjoyment of the word and ways of Him, who has in truth become their wisdom by means of that cross, which is, at once, the proof of His love to them, and the condemnation of all that is in man as a child of Adam. Finally, may the tender exhortation of the Apostle Paul find an answer in our hearts, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; 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."—  
 (Rom. xii. 1, 2.)

J. W. S.

## THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD:—WHEN?

WE may be *waiting* for the coming of the Lord, supposing not only a thousand but a million of years were first to come. But if I were sure it were not to come before only next year, I could not be *watching* for it thus. And so the Lord puts it: "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come;" and again, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh," (Math. xxiv. 42, xxv. 13).

Now we have seen to what sort of coming this refers. The conclusion is irresistible then, that, if I am to watch for this, it cannot be the doctrine of Scripture that the millennium, as people call it, is to come first.

But this is the grand objection to the constant expectation of the Lord's return. Christianity is yet to triumph everywhere, the world to be converted, righteousness to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Does not the Bible say this? they ask. Part of this undoubtedly it does, and what it says will be accomplished too. But does it follow, that all this, or any of it, will be accomplished before the Lord Jesus comes? If it says so, where is the passage to be found? People have brought forward Acts iii. 21: "whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution (i. e. restoration) of all things." That I believe most firmly; *till* the restoration of all things, the Lord Jesus will remain in heaven: but not *till* AFTER these times, as they seem strangely to take it. "Till the times" is till they begin, not till they end. If that had been meant, it could and would have been said.

But others with more reason would ask, (for our English version of the Bible supposes it)—will it not be "the end of the world" when the Lord Jesus comes again? Our translators had this evidently in their

minds when they translated Matth. xiii. 39, 40, 49, as well as ch. xxiv. 3; but every scholar knows that the words in the original Greek do not necessarily mean this at all. There are two words translated "world" in that very chap. xiii. The first is found in verses 35 and 38: "from the foundation of the world," and "the field is the world." That is the proper word for it—"kosmos." But in the other passages, the word is quite a different one—"aion;" and means "age"—"the end of the age." It is translated in the plural "ages" in Eph. ii. 7, and Col. i. 26; and should be so in Heb. ix. 26, "now once in the end of the *ages* (Christ) hath appeared." Here they have again translated "world," yet no one supposes that the end of the world had really come when Christ appeared in the flesh.\*

On the other hand, when we look at the passages which speak of that restitution of all things which is (as all would perhaps own) to come before the end of the world, properly so called, we soon find most positive scripture proof that the Lord Jesus must come first; whether we turn to Old Testament or New.

Thus Isaiah xi. is one of the plainest and most indisputable passages, perhaps, in the Old Testament, as referring to this "restitution." In it are found the very words so often quoted as to it, that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," (ver. 9). But this chapter distinctly refers all this blessing to the righteous *government* of the

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\* I add a word of caution and of explanation for some who may need it, as to our "Authorized" or King James' "version." I should be sorry to be thought to wish in any way to disparage it as a translation. Not only could I build safely for my soul's salvation upon its teaching, but as a translation it is generally excellent. To say that there are defects in it is only to say that the translators were of course *men*, and not inspired men. Competent critics think it to be almost the best translation in existence. And those may be very rightly suspected of grave error themselves who are continually harping on its defects.

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"Branch of Jesse," not sending forth the gospel, but *smiting the earth* with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slaying the wicked" (compare 2 Thess. ii. 8). Israel is in that day to be gathered again, as well as Judah, (12,13) and the Holy One to dwell in Zion as of old (xii. 6). Or take Zech. xiv. in proof. Here we find a day in which "the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name One" (ver. 9). Most certainly this is the same time of blessing. How is it introduced? Why, "the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (5). Can it be a figurative coming, not only of the Lord, but of "all His saints"? Even that thought, scarcely possible, is banished. "His feet shall stand," we are told, "in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (4); the very place from which He went up, and where the angels announced to the disciples His future return, "in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i. 11).

Passage after passage might be in like manner produced. But there is no need of multiplying them. I turn now to the New Testament therefore. And here I ask, what is the whole tenor of its teaching as to the state of the world around us, and our relation as Christians to it, throughout this present time? Is it not, that "all that is of the world is not of the Father" (1 Jno. ii. 16)? that the "course of this world" is "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2)? that Satan is its "God" (2 Cor. iv. 4), its "prince" (Jno. xiv. 30)? that, if it had persecuted Christ, it would also persecute His people (Jno xv. 20)? that its judgment was already pronounced, when it rejected Him (Jno. xii. 31)? that therefore friendship with it is enmity with God (Jas. iv. 5)? that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. iii. 11)?

These are well known and very simple statements. But could they apply to the millennium, or be true of us in a state of things, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea? The answer is plain,—they could not. Therefore it is just as plain, that the New Testament contemplates no conversion of the world generally, so long as that body of people to whom these sayings are addressed, remain in the midst of it. The Lord must come first and remove His people now on earth, before such a thing is possible at all.

Now compare Isa. xxiv-xxvii. and see how completely this is confirmed there. It is the time of earth's terrible judgment, and the Lord "*cometh out of His place*" to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (xxvi. 21). In that day "the host of the high ones on high"—Satan and his host—are punished. Thus the power of the "god of this world" is broken. The "kings of the earth," also, are punished on the earth; and the Lord of hosts reigns openly as King of kings (xxiv. 21-23). Then, too, "death is swallowed up in victory" (xxv. 8,)—that is, as 1 Cor. xv. 54 teaches, by the resurrection of the saints. And at this time it is, and not before, that the veil of unbelief spread over all nations is removed, and the rebuke of God's people taken away from off all the earth (xxv. 7, 8). Then mark, too,—Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit (xxvii. 5.) \*

Here is then, the conversion of the world, and the

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\* Let any one compare Rev. xix., xx with this, and note how exact the correspondence is. He will find here also the coming of the Lord (xix. 11-15), the judgment of the kings of the earth (17-21) and of Satan (xx. 1-3). He will find how these are shut up as prisoners in the pit, and after many days (the whole millennial time) are visited (Isa. xxiv. 22). Also, the resurrection of the saints (xx. 4-6) and the millennium.

The careful weighing of these Scriptures will be quite sufficient, it is believed, to convince any unprejudiced mind of what is the truth on these important points.

## 48      KEY-NOTES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

restitution of all things clearly foretold ; but the resurrection of the saints and the coming of the Lord Himself as plainly precede it.

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## KEY-NOTES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

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In EPHESIANS, again, we have the development of the truth as to the body, the Church, and are looked at as *in* the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, blessed with all spiritual blessings there in Him. The Church (a thing unrevealed until New Testament times, ch. iii.) is His body, formed of Jew and Gentile brought together in one, the death of Christ having removed the partition-wall of the law, and reconciled both together to God, the Spirit giving us access through Christ to the Father. This Church is also *growing* unto an holy temple in the Lord, and even now in Him God's spiritual dwelling place.

Chap. iv. gives the growth of the body through the gifts of the ascended Christ ; ch. v., Christ's personal love and care for it, that it should be according to His desires. Finally chap. vi. warns us to be fully armed against the *wiles* of the devil, who would keep us out of the enjoyment of an inheritance which he has forfeited, as the Canaanites strove against Israel in their day.

In Colossians it is *life* in the individual saint that is prominent, where in Ephesians it is the *Spirit*, as forming and animating the *body*.

We have thus in these four epistles reached, step by step, the summit of the Christian position *in* Christ before God, and united to Him as members of His body, the Church. We may now, therefore, perhaps, most fittingly take up the other Church epistles, before proceeding to those which speak of individual life and walk. Thus—



1 CORINTHIANS gives us this Church of God, which we have seen in its heavenly character in Ephesians, as down here in a hostile world, liable to assault and to corruption; and the development of its order, as the body of Christ wherein all the members are in mutual service and harmony, and as the house of God, set up in the world as the witness of His authority, and a temple for His praise (comp. Eph. ii. 16-22). The body is ONE; the house, "*holiness* becomes." The attempt of the enemy,—alas, but too successful—is to introduce *schism* (division) into the body, and *unholiness* into the house. These attempts we already see (and their commencing success) in 1 Corinthians. After a brief introduction, as usual, opening the way to what follows, the character of the opposition is pointed out, first, the *world* (ch. i-iv), which its rejection of Christ the only Wisdom and Power of God, leaves in impotence and folly (i. ii.) Yet were the church-builders introducing the world into the church (iii), and Christians taking their ease in it and walking like men (iv.)

Thus world-wisdom made provision for the *flesh*, and its lusts were already openly indulged; worse than heathen-vices were among them (v.) They were exacting their own and defrauding their brethren (vi.) This leads to the examination of how far nature could be rightly allowed, and of the power grace gave over what was lawful but might not be expedient (vi. 12-vii.)

But there was a darker power in the world than the flesh even. The idolatry of the heathen made manifest the *devil's* work there. They are enjoined not to let their knowledge of the vanity of idols lead them into even apparent connection with them (viii., x. 14-33). The parenthesis (dependent on ch. viii. 13) gives the principle of the surrender for the sake of others of that which was the apostle's right (ix. 1-23) and the necessity of keeping under the body, in view of a mere formal religion coming in (ix. 24—x. 13).

## 50 KEY-NOTES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

Now we have the order of the Church on earth, maintaining the original order of creation before the fall (xi. 1-16), *not* baptism (comp. ch. i. 17) but the Lord's supper (17-34) the sign of the unity of the body, as well as the memorial of the Lord's death. Next (xii.) the gifts in relation to the body; ch. xiii. the spirit in which they are to be exercised, and ch. xiv, the actual order of the assembly as to this.

The most serious evil remains for consideration last. The principle of apostasy was already, alas, there—the infidel giving up of the truth of God. Resurrection was already being denied: in reality, the key-stone of the church's position, and of the gospel itself (ch. xv). Here the contrast between the earthly and the heavenly (which we are) is insisted on. Exhortations close the whole.

Sanctification (separation to God) is thus a truth insisted on all through this epistle (as see i. 2, 30, vi. 11 &c).

II CORINTHIANS is a supplement of course to the first. In this way, that it is the spirit of the ministry of the gifts in the body, which is here opened up to us. The heart of the apostle, filled with heaviness as it had been on account of their condition, now relieved by the good news of how the first epistle had been received, overflows towards these objects of his love, and the fullness of it is poured out, letting us know all that filled and all that burdened it, and what sustained under its burdens the heart of one who, as a servant of Christ and of His Church, had perhaps no equal among men.

The first general character of this ministry is that for it no mere intellectual knowledge will suffice, but the experience of the sufferings of Christ and of God's ability to comfort, as well as the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in the God of resurrection (i. 1-11). Next, certainty in

## KEY-NOTES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS 51

the message and the messenger (12-22) and the zeal and tenderness of love (23-ii. 13).

Then as to the matter of it, it is the manifestation of the savour of the knowledge of Christ (14-17), the ministry of the *new* covenant, whereby not a law written on tables of stone was given, but the Spirit of God wrote Christ upon the heart (iii. 1-3). The ministration of the law was "of death," and "of condemnation," and the glory of God veiled from man; the ministration of the Spirit was of life, of righteousness, of liberty, and the glory of God in the face of Christ, unveiled, shining down into the soul (4-iv. 5), which reflected the brightness of it in the world again (6); this treasure being in the earthen vessel of poor frail humanity, upon which every wave of trial beat, but in vain; for Christ was there, and the excellency of this power was seen to be of God. Death working on the outer man made the life within to shine out brighter, and to work in others (7-12). Faith looked beyond to resurrection, and death itself was welcome (13-v. 8). The thought of judgment, again, only turned the soul from its *ecstatic rapture with God*, to think soberly of poor souls exposed to it (9-13) and knowing His love who died for all (14, 15) and looking at every one from the new place in Christ (16, 17) itself reconciled to God (18) to go out to them with the word of reconciliation (19-21) commending the ministry of Christ by suffering, by labour, and by life (xi. 1-10).

The apostle now exhorts to separation from unbelievers as of absolute necessity to the enjoyment of their place as children of God (ii. 18); and he commends their self-judgment (vi.) and next exhorts them to (what is but another form of ministry if done to Christ in His members) the ministering of their substance to the saints (viii, ix). The order of these things is important.

We have next the *opposition* to the ministry, alas,

from within, as well as from without (x. xi.) and the visions and revelations by which the apostle was sustained (xi. 1-6) as well as the discipline by which self-exaltation needed (even in him) to be restrained (7-10). Finally, the "signs of an apostle," and the proof of Christ speaking in him, which they themselves, converted by his means, afforded.

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## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

ROMANS (Continued from p. 28).

THE second part of Romans shows us the present position of the believer before God in Christ. His justification just looked at, ch. iii. and iv., was his clearance from the sins which brought him in guilty before God. *They* are not then in question any more. The blood of Jesus has settled that; and he has found how "blessed is the man to whom the Lord *will* not impute sin." Not only so: he stands for the present time in the favor of God, and wrath to come for him there cannot be; for the One who died for him now lives in glory, to secure his final and complete salvation.

What can there be beyond this? some might perhaps ask. But there is more. For the God who has given His Son is not satisfied with simply meeting need. He is showing "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us." He is glorifying Himself—glorifying His Son. Moreover, many a question even yet remains to be answered before there can be complete, abiding rest for the soul.

In the next section (ch. v. 12-viii.) we find therefore two main topics on which the apostle dwells, and which are closely connected in his thought, however far apart *in themselves* they may seem to be. The first is, that the believer is before God *in Christ*, his Representative; that *as in Christ*, "accepted in the Beloved," what he is

## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

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as a man down here is no more in question than what he has *done* is. God reckons to him what Christ is and what Christ has done, and it is faith's part to look where God is looking and to reckon as *He* reckons. The second thing, closely connected with this as I have said, is the *practical* righteousness in life and walk down here, which flows from the apprehension of the place we are put in. We are, even in this present world, "as Christ is." We are responsible to "walk as he walked." And our power to do this is in proportion to our actual occupation of heart with Him, our real reckoning of ourselves what God reckons us.

Here necessarily we have to face the reality of our having still an old nature in us, in itself as bad as ever, even after we have believed in Christ. And this puts us in connection at once with our fallen first father, through whom sin entered into the world.

The main points in ch. v. 12-21 are thus briefly these: that by one man sin entered into the world, and death, universal as the sin (12). Thus men were actually made sinners (19), and the tendency was to bring them all under final condemnation (18). But that this first man, Adam, was a figure of One to come (14), through whom God's grace and gift (upon the same principle of "the One" for "the many" [15]) have brought justification of life as a possibility for all men (18), and by whose obedience the many connected with Him shall be actually made righteous (19). But thus God's grace in the work of Christ goes far beyond the mere balancing the results of Adam's disobedience (15-17). On the one side one offence brought in death; on the other grace remits many offences (16). On the one side by one offence *death* reigned; on the other, through the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, *those who receive it* reign in life (17). It is well seen why, for this abundant gift of righteousness is all the fruit and

value of the obedience of the Son of God Himself (19).

Then as to the law. It did not cause sin. Sin was in man, and he died for it, "from Adam to Moses," the period before law came to a fallen creature. But it did this: it *imputed* sin; that is, it declared what sin was, and charged it upon man in detail; and sin thus committed, in the knowledge that God had forbidden it became *transgression*,—not merely doing lawlessly one's own will, but setting aside the authority of God (13, 14). Thus Adam had transgressed (14), and thus the law entered that the offence might abound (20): to bring out the sin of man in its full character, in order that, his condition being completely exposed, grace might be seen as that, abounding over it, displacing and reigning in its stead, through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord (21).

These are the great principles which are carried out and insisted on in the three following chapters. And at once we see how the question of righteousness in our ways down here unites itself with that of our righteousness before God (ch. vi.) It is asked at once, "What then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" The reply to which is by showing how our place in Christ, when really recognized in heart by faith, forbids the thought of it. We that are dead to sin, how shall we live in it? (2)

But *how* are we dead to sin? Why, he says, your baptism teaches that. You were baptized to Christ—to His death, and it was your burial, the end of you as a sinner, a child of Adam (3, 4). Christ died for us, our Substitute: *we*, then, have died *with Him*; or,—since we still live, let us say,—"*our old man* was crucified with Him." We, therefore, as children of Adam are gone from before God in the death of our Substitute. And He "died unto sin once," having taken what we were upon Himself, and by dying cancelled it. He

lives now to God beyond it all. Faith therefore reckons all this true as to ourselves: we are to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord." (6-11).

It is the place God has given us, the result of Christ's work for us; in no wise what we *feel* or *find* ourselves; but what God reckons us to be, and what therefore by faith we reckon ourselves. We are seen alone in Christ now; can there be either sin or sins—sinful nature or practice,—attaching to us there? Impossible. But, you say, I find these in myself. Well, God sees not that self that you are looking at: *that* ended for Him upon the cross, it is no more yourself before Him; *Christ in glory* is alone what you are, for He represents you there.

Oh, what a deliverance for the soul occupied but this moment with its own thoughts and feelings, its experiences of sin and evil,—gazing now upon the beauty and glory of Christ as all its own in the presence of God. But, you say, what about the practical results of all that in the life? Well, it is impossible to have real faith in this without its producing holiness. Men may of course be hypocrites, but none can really know by faith that he is dead in sin, and use that to live in it. And so the apostle goes on to test the reality of faith in it, in this very way (12-23). Now, he says, "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." If you look within, sin is there still: don't let it reign, but yield yourselves to God. You, who have found the fruitlessness of sin, and that the end of it is death (2) and who have obeyed *from the heart* that doctrine that set you free from it,—who have embraced it as your deliverance (19, 18) you are become the willing servants of righteousness. On the other hand, whatever doctrine they profess, those who *yield themselves* up to sin, who are its willing servants, will get its wages: "the wages of

sin is death ;" on the other hand, not the wages, but "the GIFT of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." \* (23)

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FRAGMENTS.

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"I remember a Chinese boy who was in service in the house of one of the C——'s in Demerara. He had hold of the New Testament, and read it carefully. He was very apt to bring the Testament down, in a gracious way to bear on the people of the house. One day his mistress said, 'Oh, what a poor thing I am.' 'Ma'am, I thought you were one of Christ's people; I thought you were a member of Christ.' It searched her heart, whether she were not too much on 'my leanness, my leanness,' instead of in the scene of triumph in Him.

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A man likes thinking badly of himself, aye, and saying so, better than not thinking of himself at all, and simply displaying Christ's gracious life by thinking on Him only. We have to judge ourselves, but our right state is thinking of the Lord alone.

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Have you ever known what it is to be brought down to death's door from conflict? I have known what it is —passing week after week and never closing the eyes, simply because *I* wanted to do something, and Christ had done it all. Peace came to me in that verse, God saying "My Son bore all your sin in His own body on that tree."

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\* Both here and verse 11 the Greek word is "en" (in).



## PEACE WITH GOD.

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It is a sweet message to carry to convicted souls, the words of Jesus, plain and positive as they are, full and precious for the broken hearted:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth in Me *hath* everlasting life." The assurance of God's own word is solid ground to rest upon; better surely than emotion or excitement or good work of our own can give. There is never peace with God in either of these ways in which so many, consciously or unconsciously, are seeking it. God has his own appointed way of salvation, and if He has appointed it, it is not for us to choose in the matter, but to obey. Naturally, we prefer any other way to God's; and yet what an awful mistake to choose the wrong path here. He has not left us to uncertainty, however, about it, for it is written, (Rom. v. 1): "Being justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, we find on putting to professing christians the question, "Have *you* peace with God?" that with very many it is a thing all unsettled. According to God, and his word cannot be broken,—"*being justified by faith, we have*" it. Assuredly then, whosoever has not peace lacks what belongs to every believer, and can have no right to be at ease.

How solemn is the position of many professed christians! Religious, but without peace, and seemingly content to go on in that way: especially as they see so many around them in the same uncertainty. Have you, dear reader, peace with God? Brought face to face with God, so to speak, have you peace with Him? What about your sins, and what about your *self*—all that you are to the innermost depths of your being? How fares it with you in the presence of One, who cannot look

upon sin, and who is "a consuming fire"? to whose eye all things are naked and opened; *and with whom we have to do?*

How wretched a thing is it to be acting in the sight of man, and not before God! With Him there is no covering oneself up with a cloak of religion; no avail in a conscience quieted for the time by the vain thought of "having done one's best," or by "hoping" or "trying" or the false teaching that there is piety in doubt. Alas, many such may awake, both teachers and taught, to the awful realization, that their pious doubts and seeming humility were but the keeping open a door to enjoy the world, with a profession of faith at the same time.

Yes, little as many professing christians may seem to believe it, or care about it,—*"peace with God" now*, abiding and settled peace, and nothing short of it, is the only proper resting-place for the soul of man.

This peace is not attained by looking at the best side of our experiences; neither is it based upon religious emotion, nor yet upon a consistent Christian life. If you think you have somewhat in that way to rely upon, still, is there not another side to your experience? How about that other side? When your eye is upon your shortcomings, and upon what you find in the secret places of your soul,—have you "peace" in view of all this? Not, are you little troubled about it? or satisfied to be as others, but is *God* satisfied, do you think? Are you accepted of Him, who, whatever we may suppose, cannot look at sin? It is a sad thing to be at peace with *ourselves*, and yet not certain about peace with God.

Let us now turn to His own word, and may He give blessing to our souls, while we briefly consider a few verses in this Epistle to the Romans.

In chap. iv. 3 it records for us a remarkably plain

example of faith, in these few but important words : " Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Now this was recorded *for us*, as we find in the positive assuring words in the last three verses of the same chapter :—" Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed,"—mark the assurance,—if what? what is the only condition of righteousness being imputed to us?—" if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." But what was the raising of Jesus from the dead to me? This—, (and may the words, all important for the sinner's peace, come home to the reader's heart)—" who was delivered for our offences, and *raised again* for our JUSTIFICATION."

Not, " delivered, that we might do good works to be justified," but " delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." If I believe, then, I am justified from all things. Without any work at all, I can rejoice at once ; for " to him that worketh *not*, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." This is God's way of peace for us ; may the heart rest in Him, and the eye be fixed on Jesus, as we repeat the blessed words : " who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

Yes, we can join in Peter's glad outburst of praise, (as from the lips of one who had watched the gates of the tomb in dark doubt) :—" Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Nothing else is needed. That settles all as to my justification, that God has raised again from the dead the One delivered for my offences. Not for *part* of my offences, beloved reader : if so, what about the rest?—but for all of them.

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Believing in Him who has thus done all for us, the fruit of our faith will be obedience out of a glad heart, set free from bondage to praise and glorify the deliverer.

The beginning and the end of this peace is Christ: He is the First and the Last in it. The work of Satan is undone, and man brought back to God by the Second Man, the Lord from heaven. Is it a small thing—this peace,—in a world of centuries of wickedness—wrath treasured up against the day of wrath, ever since Adam shrank from God among the trees of the garden? But this is ours for ever, dear fellow-believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace with God is ours:—with Him before whose face the earth and the heavens yet will flee away, and no place be found for them—and none for any soul that builds not on the one sure foundation.

*We have* peace. We have not to make it, or better it by good Christian conduct. We have it perfected through our Lord Jesus Christ, or we have it not at all. "He has made peace by the blood of His cross." Paul or Peter had no other ground of confidence than this. Dear reader, you who have it not, is it not enough for you? Rest in Him, then; and you have no more to do than Israel when bidden to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

*We have* seen it, and, being saved, are free to serve Him, "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God."

E. S. L.

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No one can look upon Christ dying on the Cross, and say, "He is not enough for my sins."

## THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

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THE question as to what is commonly called, "the perseverance of the saints," includes in it another and a most serious one. That question is, as to the footing upon which the believer, justified by faith, stands before God. Thus a point of the greatest moment it is, to ascertain what the Scripture truth is. It is not too much to say, that the nature and character of the peace which as Christians we enjoy, and of our life and walk as such, are all materially affected by the view we entertain with regard to the truth before us.

I would at once then put the question : what is the nature of the salvation we have received, and what the footing upon which we now stand as believers before God ?

Clearly, we stand as such, before God "in Christ," "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6). Christ in glory, risen from the dead, having finished in our behalf the work of atonement, stands as our representative in the presence of God. So fully, that what He has passed through for us *we* are accredited with. Thus we are said to be "dead," "buried," "quickened," and "raised up" *with Him* ; and even "seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Rom. vi. 8 ; Eph. ii. 5, 6.) His being in heaven for us is thus as if we had actually gone in there and taken possession already of our final home ; and there we are, presented to the eye and heart of God as identified with Him who "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Our former state and condition as sinners has thus found its judgment in the cross. "Our old man was crucified with Christ:"—not *should*, or *shall* be, but "*was*;" not was crucified *in me*, but "*with Him*."

(Rom. vi.) Thus, for God and for faith, the old standing has passed away. "We are not in the flesh," (Rom. viii. 9); "not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world." (John xvii. 14.) To sum up all in a word, the apostle's words as to the Christian place are, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, *all* things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.)

I know that all these things are read, or sought to be read, in the light of experience, and referred to an inward work in the soul, instead of to our place in Christ, and what belongs to it. Yet Scripture says distinctly in this last case, as in others, "if any man be *in Christ*," and then uses expressions which would certainly not be true of "*any* man in Christ," (mark) if applied to the inward work. "*All* things new," who indeed can pretend to, that knows anything of himself? Thus these blessed texts taken from their true application are made instruments of self-torture for souls seeking honestly but blindly to find in themselves evidences that they are accepted of God. While, with the eye on Christ, and the knowledge that we are in Him, and therefore, "as He is, so are we," (1 John iv. 17), they become the sweetest, fullest assurances of where Divine love has placed us, and what we are to God as in His Son. Is there any "old thing" in Him? If I am thus accepted of God, are not the "old things passed away?" are not "all things become new?" Yes, indeed, wholly. I can take it in the simplest way, and believe it to the fullest extent, and find it unutterable joy, and only that.

Well, this is how we are accepted. We have travelled through death in Christ, and come up out of it. We have taken possession in Him already of our place above. We are accepted of Him where no whit of the "old things" is found. Look at this, beloved reader, and then

answer me, O answer me,—is this *security*? Will Christ fail to satisfy God? Will God, who has accepted Him for me, repent, and again turn to what I am? Alas for me, if He does! Alas for me and for you; and that, not at our worst, but at our best!

But no: that is impossible; for with Christ—in Christ's death,—we have died. "He that is dead is justified from sin." (Rom. vi. 7 *margin.*) Our life, our history, ended with the cross, in complete and utter judgment. We live before God in Christ alone. His own words are now, "Because *I* live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.)

2. And thus have we "peace"; and upon such ground as this is "peace" in the proper sense alone possible. I need scarcely waste words in proving that it is peace that God is preaching by Jesus Christ, (Acts x. 36), and that "being justified by faith we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. x. 1.) Not only the "full assurance of faith," (Heb. x. 22), but "the full assurance of *hope*," also, is what God designs for us (vi. 11.) This is peace as to the past, the present, *and the future*; and this is alone true peace. However blest my portion in the present, if there is danger that I lose it, who shall say I ought not to be afraid? It is no comfort to say to me, "it all depends upon yourself," when "myself" is just what I have learned most of all to be afraid of. Ought I to have "perfect peace" in looking onward to the future, if it is to consist in assurance that *I* shall never backslide and depart, though many have! If I read, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee"—I can understand that, if I may trust Him for the future too. If I may say, in confidence that I have committed my soul into His hands,—"*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have com-*

mitted unto Him against that day, (2 Tim. i. 12), then indeed all is well. If He will not keep it, except I do my part (little or much), then, how can it be peace?

To trust Him fully, if He be all in it, is surely well and what I ought to do. But on the other hand, I *ought* to *distrust* myself. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." But if I am not to think I stand, and yet my salvation depends upon my standing, ought I to be at rest?

3. But blessed be God, it is not so. Perfected as a Saviour through the suffering of the cross, Christ is become "the author of *eternal* salvation unto all them that obey Him." (Heb. v. 9). What is "eternal" salvation? and when do I receive it? Well, Paul says to us that God "HATH saved us" (2 Tim. i. 9.) Is not that, then, "eternal salvation"? If I have obeyed Him,—for the gospel calls for obedience, most surely (Rom. x. 16)—if I have obeyed His call of grace and come to Him,—is He not the author of eternal salvation to me just then? or must I wait till there is no more danger, before I can speak of being saved for ever?

4. But redemption, too, is eternal. "He hath entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal redemption* for us," (Heb. ix. 12). Well, are we redeemed? Yes, assuredly, "we HAVE *redemption* through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. i. 7.) Is that, then "for ever"? Alas, through how many of the plainest testimonies of Scripture, the legality and unbelief of the human heart will work their way! Yet there it lies, the only true and perfect rest for the conscience, as we are witness to ourselves: there it lies before us, preaching peace without presumption, because "peace through Jesus Christ." Will He rebuke me, think you, because I cast this **burden with all other burdens on Himself?** May I not



cast this care for the future too upon Him ! Will He not justify my trust ? Will He not care also for this ?

5. But my "life," too, is "eternal." I already *have* "everlasting life." How He has compassed me about with these eternities, as if to build me up an infinite rampart against doubt ! For thus saith the Lord Himself, "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, **HATH** everlasting life, and shall *not* come into condemnation ; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

Beloved reader, these are the Lord's own words. Solemnly uttered and affirmed as truth, they link the present and the future of the believer indissolubly together. He says, the one who *has* eternal life (in the present) *shall* not (in the future) come into condemnation. Do you believe that ? There is no "guarding" of that statement, such as men suggest ; no "if" nor "but" to mar the blessed peace that that assurance gives. Are you going to put it in ? Are you going to bring some other Scripture to qualify or modify the simple meaning of this ? It is in vain ; for "Scripture cannot be broken," and He who gave it cannot so deny Himself. The whole idea of balancing one passage with another as if, taken simply as they stand, they were opposed to one another, is false, and a fatal denial of the truth of God. What simple soul could lay hold of the truth in a statement which had to be balanced with an unknown number of other statements, before the precise meaning could be settled ? The Divine Lover of men's souls could not speak so to them. He could not use words which, taken simply and literally as they stand, would deceive. No, He could not do this. And thus, if I get *what* really He has said, I may be sure He has said nothing else to contradict or empty it of meaning. I may rest my soul upon it safely. I may build on it as on a rock.

I know few sadder signs of the little authority the Word of God has in the present day, than this deplorable habit of ranging Scripture against Scripture. On one side a text is produced; instead of reverent enquiry as to what it means, a text in opposition to it, as men deem, is produced. James' "justification by works" is put in the one scale; Paul's "justification by faith" in the other. Arminian texts are balanced with Calvinistic. Alas, God's word is gone as an authority, and common sense and human reason become supreme judges as to the side on which the scale of truth inclines.

How unlike our Lord's "Verily, verily!" What a relief to come back to that out of the fog of human uncertainty. "He spake as One that had authority, and not as the scribes." Do you fear to trust him, beloved reader, apart from all His commentators? Certainly, then, what He says of the believer is, that he *has* everlasting life and *shall* not come into condemnation, but,—here is the confirmation of it,—*is* passed from death unto life. His future condition is settled by his present one, for already he *has* "EVERLASTING life." He is alive to God for ever.

6. The Lord repeats this in another well-known passage, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." (John x. 27, 28.)

Now, if anything could add strength to the former statement, it would be precisely what we find here. For it is not only now, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish," but if people suggest, "it is only if they hear Christ's word," "it is only while they follow Him," this is met by the assertion, "My sheep *do* hear my voice," "they *do* follow Me." You may say, if you will, "not always," "not continually,"—but our Lord

says nothing one way or other about that. He takes for granted, (so to speak) that they do hear and follow ; you have no right to suppose anything else. It is not said that they hear always, or follow without any straying ; still on the whole they hear and follow, and He gives them eternal life, and they *never* perish, nor shall any pluck them out of His hand. If you say (with some) they may pluck themselves out, *then* they would perish ; but, He says, they never shall.

7. One more text on this side of the question, and as to this point more decisive perhaps for many. The apostle John, with the case of certain apostates before him, tells us in words that apply to very many since : " They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for, if they *had been* of us, they would no doubt have *continued* with us ; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John ii. 19).

The decisiveness of this passage in connection with those just quoted, is in its taking up so simply and decidedly just the point which many think to be uncovered by the others. It asserts without any qualification the exact doctrine of the " perseverance of the saints :"— " if they had been of us, they *would* have continued with us ;" their going out made it manifest that they were not of us.\*

Surely than this nothing can be plainer or more complete. With this, then, we may end the direct proofs of the doctrine. We have found the foundation of it to be a standing in Christ before God, which cannot change because He cannot. We have found that as sinners we

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\* The force of the original is, " that none were of us," which the whole passage proves to be the only possible sense. " All are not" is a Greek idiom for " none are," as in Matt. xxiv. 22 : " *no* flesh should be saved," which is literally, " all flesh should not be saved ;" or in Luke i. 37 : " with God everything shall not be impossible," i. e. " nothing shall be impossible."

had our death and judgment in the cross of Christ, and are now in Him, the old things passed away entirely. We have found that God has saved us, and that salvation is eternal ; that we have also " eternal redemption " and " everlasting life ; " that the Lord's own assertion as to His own is, that they shall not come into condemnation, nor ever perish ; that His sheep do hear His voice, and follow Him ; and that the apostle tells us that *real* Christians *will* " continue " such.

I beseech, again, my reader's earnest attention to the point, that thus, too, alone is perfect peace with God possible—peace as to the past, the present, and the future—" *full* assurance of hope " without presumption.

The way is now open to look at the passages, which are supposed to teach the possibility of salvation being lost.

*(To be continued, if the Lord will.)*

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## THE WILES OF THE DEVIL.

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Just as the Scriptures reveal a personal Saviour, so also they make known to us a personal enemy. The friend is Jesus ; the enemy is Satan. It is more pleasant to speak of the friend than of the foe ; but as the One has warned us against the other, it is well to take heed to His warnings.

Mark, then, what this friend says. He tells us that our adversary, the devil, is watching for an opportunity to assault us, and compares him to a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Violence is not, however, his only nor his most dangerous weapon. He who beguiled Eve by his subtlety, accomplishes oftentimes by cunning what he fails to effect by force, and so we are exhorted

## THE WILES OF THE DEVIL.

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to "put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the *wiles* of the devil." (Eph. vi. 11.)

Now, if ever there was a time when this injunction required to be attended to, it is the present. Persecution seems to have spent its force; Satan has apparently made the discovery that it will not now serve his purposes, and so he has changed his tactics. Cunning has superseded violence, the sap and mine have taken the place of the battering-ram; and the danger now arises from the subtlety of the serpent rather than the open assault of the roaring lion. Hence then, our need of considering the wiles of the devil, that we may be on our guard against them.

In 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4 we learn that it is Satan who hides the gospel of Christ from unbelievers. How does he do this? In the simplest manner possible. Either he places something *before* Christ, or substitutes something *for* Christ. A penny placed before the eye will hide the sun; the world placed before the soul will hide the Saviour. What is more common than to see men wholly occupied with the world, and living in utter forgetfulness of the Son of God, slighting and rejecting Him for the sake of wealth or fame or power or pleasure? And what is more common than to see men whose thoughts are directed to the subject of salvation occupied with some form of religion instead of Christ? The ritualist, I doubt not, is in earnest, and believes that he is serving God; but what is he occupied with? Rites and ceremonies, sacred music, and clerical vestments. And so with many also who repudiate ritualism, and yet are occupied too with outward observances, and living without Christ. From all such—papist, ritualist, or Protestant—the gospel is hid, as it is "to those that are lost;" and they are as completely that as the liar or the

thief. Satan is wise in his own way. He knows that it is not crime or sensuality or covetousness only, that ruin the soul. Religion without Christ will do it as effectually, perhaps even more so. Never is the devil so much to be feared, as when in the guise of an "angel of light."

Misplacing truth is another of the wiles of the devil, whereby he ruins countless souls. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ; and thou shalt be saved." All that the sinner needs is to come to the Saviour, and salvation is his. This Satan knows, and seeks with all his power to hinder it. When he can no longer prevent such an one from thinking of salvation, he whispers, " You are not fit to come to Christ yet ; you must amend your ways first, pray, read the Bible, cultivate a spirit of devotion, "do many things." This, while Christ says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," the wily adversary by misplacing truth would prevent the anxious one from coming. Now it is indeed true, that men should pray, read the Bible, amend their ways, or the like ; but it is not true that they must do anything before believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and therefore, without faith, these things are of no avail. Satan would reverse God's order. He would give Christ and the cross a secondary place. Nay, if he could he would give them no place at all. Follow God's order and the result is life and peace. Yield to the wiles of the devil, and the result is death.

Souls that are Christ's, and have escaped these dangers, do not thereby pass out of reach of the wiles of the devil. He who tempted the Master, will not leave the disciples unassailed. For a season he induced them to doubt the *freeness* of Christ's salvation ; now he will try to make them doubt its *fullness*. Alas, how few escape the snare. Nothing can be plainer from Scrip-

ture, than that the believer is saved, that he may *know* that he is saved, and that he cannot be lost. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." "I write unto you, little children, because your sins *are* forgiven you for His name's sake." "My sheep hear My voice, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall *never* perish." "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may *know* that ye have everlasting life." These texts are but a few examples of Scripture teaching. But it has ever been the policy of Satan to lessen the force of Scripture, to induce men to doubt the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and to get souls occupied with themselves instead of Him. Hence, when those who rest their faith on the plain statements of the Word, speak of the blessed position in which the believer is placed, there is a cry of presumption raised. This is one of the wiles of the devil. If the Christian is still according to the old nature a sinner, it is equally true he is a *pardoned* sinner. If in his flesh dwells no good thing, he is yet "accepted in the Beloved." If he *was* a child of disobedience and of wrath, he *is*, none the less, now a child of God. He has entered into a new state and sphere of existence. Dead with Christ as to all the past, he has been quickened together with Christ, raised together with Him, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. To deny this is to deny Scripture and the fullness of Christ's salvation.

Who placed us in this wondrous position as the redeemed of God? Did we ourselves? Nay, verily. Who, then? Christ by His grace. Then why speak of presumption in saying it is ours? If the Queen of her own good pleasure were to make me a peer of the realm, would I be guilty of presumption, if I said I *was* a peer of the realm? If Christ by His grace has made me a

king and priest unto God, is it presumption to say that He has done it? No, it is rather unbelief to deny it, and instead of praising Him for His grace, to begin to talk of myself and my own personal unworthiness.

And now let us take note of another, and also very successful wile of the devil, whereby the Church of God has been grievously injured. Before our blessed Lord went away He said to His sorrowing disciples, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that, where I am, there ye may be also." This is the "blessed hope" set before the church. We are assured that "the Lord *Himself* will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God," and that all His saints, dead or living at that time, will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and to be with Him for ever. What a precious thought! In this world, we which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body. The whole creation, groaning and travailing together in the bondage of corruption, waits also for the same time—"for the manifestation of the sons of God," (Rom. viii. 19). These groans will be stilled when the Lord returns, and heaven and earth break forth in songs of joy, when the Bridegroom comes for His royal Bride, and the King ascends His throne.

There is no more precious truth for the Christian. The thought that any moment the Lord may come cheers him through his pilgrim journey, and separates him from a world which loves not the name of Jesus. It did so in the brightest days of the Church, and it is fitted to do so now. But Satan has here also employed his wiles. By substituting the delusive hope of a triumphant Church and a converted world for the "blessed hope," he has succeeded in drawing away the hearts of



many of the people of God from the coming of the Lord. If, as some say, Christ will not come till the close of the millennium, of what use is it to remind Christians, that they ought to have their loins girded and their lamps burning, waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom?

How can men whose span of life is limited to three-score years and ten, be expected to be on the look-out for an event, that will not take place for a thousand years? But it is said, that Christ comes at death, and will come to judgment. Indeed! Is death the Lord Himself? Does it come with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God? Are the dead in Christ raised, and is the church caught up into the air, when a Christian dies? Or if you say, that is at the judgment, is it conceivable that Paul bade the Thessalonians be comforted at the thought of standing before the great white throne, when he speaks of Christ's coming for His church (1 Thess. iv.)?

For my part, I cannot doubt that the confounding of things so opposite has been effected by the wiles of the devil. Just as he succeeds in hiding Christ from unbelievers, and making them think of the works of the law instead, so has he succeeded in getting believers to think more of the gospel of Christ than Christ Himself, and attributing to it what alone His personal coming will effect. It is true that "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," but it is not true that that will be effected by the preaching of the gospel. Scripture is very plain upon this point, that Christ will come first and take away His Church; then Israel will be converted, the earth purged with judgment, and the Lord appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. It is then that He will take the kingdom which his saints will share with Him; Israel be fully restored, the Spirit be poured upon

them from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness will be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

H. M.

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### THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD.

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It was a characteristic of the Lord's teaching that astonished those who heard Him, that He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes. These latter had their judgment, their opinions; still they were after all fallible, and might be wrong. Our Lord admitted no such question as to what He spake. His utterances were no opinions, but truth and only truth: truth that they were responsible to God about from the moment they heard it, just because it was such. "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" was His own appeal on one occasion; and He then adds, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God," (John viii. 46, 47.)

Let us examine this briefly, as it applies to us in this present day. Scripture of course, to us of the present day, alone takes this place of absolute authority. None upon earth now, nor since the apostles' days can apply as his own, the statement, so like the Lord's, "he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us," (1 John iv. 6). This, all Protestants will allow. And the Word asserts for itself in the most definite way, its own sufficiency and supremacy to the exclusion of every thing else. Thus the apostle Paul, taking his final farewell of them at Ephesus, commends

them "to God, and the word of His grace ; which," says he, "is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." (Acts xx. 32). And this same Paul, writing to one afterward at the same city of Ephesus, says furthermore of it, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).

This is true of "all Scripture." Many will ask me, however in the present day, how I know what *is* Scripture, and how far "*all* Scripture" extends, As to that, there is no difficulty : our Lord's words have already supplied us with the answer. Upon His own showing, "He that is of God hears God's words," or as He puts it in another place, "He that will do God's will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." (John vii. 17). A book is put into my hand as the Word of God. Do I receive it upon the authority of the Church (as some say) the appointed keeper of it ? Do I believe it because "the voice of the Church" declares it such ? If that is so, I believe the Church indeed, but not the Word itself. On the other hand Scripture itself teaches me, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," (Rom. x. 17). Thus, when I listen to it, God gives His gracious witness, and if I am willing to do His will, I know of the doctrine, that it is of God.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." There is another question. What is inspiration ? and how far is scripture God-inspired ? Well, inspiration is, in effect, what the apostle Peter says of prophecy : "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." They were not only "moved." They were not "moved" and then left to their human wisdom as to *how* they

spake. They spake *as* they were moved. The apostle Paul tells us how far this inspiration extends, even to the very words used. "Which things also we speak, *not* in the *words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (Cor. ii. 13.)

Thus "*all* scripture" in the fullest sense—every word of it,—is God's. Of course translations may be imperfect for the translators are *not* inspired; manuscript copies may differ for the same reason. But when we get what actually apostles or prophets or inspired writers in general wrote, we get the very words of the Holy Ghost—of God Himself. Truth therefore, absolutely pure, that I can rest my soul upon with the most undoubting assurance, is what I find in scripture; and not simply, as some would have it, in points of "religious interest" alone, but upon whatever He has been pleased to speak about.

Thus though I fully recognize that Scripture is not designed to teach me what people dignify with the proud name of "*science*," yet I am sure *its* science in every point is perfect as all else. For instance the account of creation is a Divine account, not the best that Moses could give me, according to the light men had at that time. All true science must be in accordance with it, therefore all that is not in accordance with it is *not* true.

Complete verbal inspiration is what scripture asserts there for itself. He whose word it is, has not left us to disentangle truth from error in what He has given. If it were so, instead of its having authority over me, I should have to exercise *my* judgment upon *it*; and this is actually just what men are doing.

One more thing before I close. The perfection of the word is found also in this, that it is able to "*furnish thoroughly to every good work.*" Nothing is there in my whole walk, private or public, that does not come

## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

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under its notice. It is a matter of concern to God, whether a woman should have her head covered in prayer or not (1 Cor. xi.) I refuse then, distinctly and absolutely, submission to any human rules or regulations, which are proposed, with whatever good intentions, to supplement the word of God. *It* is provided for my entire governance. I dare not accept the thought of its not being able to furnish me thoroughly unto every good work. I refuse subjection to every *other* word, just because *that* word covers every point of conduct.

May you and I, reader, be subject to it indeed, refusing every other authority, only that God Himself may have supreme control in all things.

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 SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.
ROMANS, (*Continued.*)

WE have already had the assurance, "sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (ch. vi. 14). This is now fully opened up to us in the seventh and first four verses of the eighth chapters. We are now taught how the death of Christ for us has delivered us from the law itself; and that, in order "that we might *bring forth fruit* to God" (4). The point is here,—and a greatly disputed one,—not that the law cannot justify us, (which was settled as far back as ch. iii. 20) but that it is, as 1 Cor. xv. 56 teaches, "*the strength of sin.*" That we may be holy, we must be "delivered from" and "dead to the law" (4,6.)

It is a doctrine still so strange to many, and yet so essential to the proper liberty and power which Christians ought to know and walk in, that I beg the earnest attention of the reader to it. I shall follow out as simply as possible the **statements of scripture** here before us,

convinced that they are neither so doubtful nor so difficult, but that the mere babe in Christ may learn; if he will, the precious, comforting lessons of the inspired Word.

We have learnt already what our place is, as believers, before God. It is "in Christ," as the One who having died for us as *sinner*s, appears for us now in the presence of God,—the Representative of His people. His death in our stead was thus *our* death; *we* are "dead with Christ" (vi. 8). "Our old man was crucified with Him" (vi. 6). We as sinners, having received our judgment in His cross, pass away as sinners from before God for ever. We are now "saints;" and, as that, represented to the eye and heart of God in His own beloved Son. Hence our security; for he can never fail. The evil that dwells in you and me, is not "in Him" on whom the whole favour of God rests in infinite delight, which embraces thus equally the poorest, weakest, unworthiest of all those for whom He stands.

The first necessity of believers is that our hearts be established in this grace of God. *Then* we may talk of practice. Otherwise the attempt at holiness is necessarily mere legality,—self-righteous effort to make our peace with Him, as most people speak; self and not Christ the root and spring of all. But "*He* died, that they which live should *not* henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 11). The heart at rest from all need for this,—at rest as to the past, the present, and the future,—and owing all to a love which brought Him from the heights of heavenly glory, down to the place of wrath and curse—to the cross; the heart that has received this love, loves: and the walk and life become the expression and the outflow of devotedness to Him. The miserable man, who boasts of his place in Christ, and uses it to

live carelessly unto himself, only shows thereby how little he knows of what he boasts of.

As believers then, (for God and for faith) we are "dead;" we are "not in the flesh" (viii. 9). The latter expression is a very simple one to one who has grasped the reality of being "dead with Christ." A man who has died is not in the flesh. Every thing turns upon this, that we have died. Thus as the apostle shows here (vii. 1-3), the law applies only to the living; death sets free from it. The woman who has an husband, if that husband dies, is free from the law of her husband, and may be another's. Believers are thus set free from the law which belongs only to living men, but not by the death of the law, the first husband, but by *themselves* dying. "Ye are become DEAD TO THE LAW by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead:"—and for what purpose? Mark it well: "that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (4).

Yes, God got no fruit by the first marriage. Man under the authority of the law produces no fruit to God, but "fruit unto *death*" (5); a very solemn assurance! And how was this? Because of the "motions of sin *which were by the law*." We see how, then, it is "the strength of sin." The heart frets against and is irritated by its restrictions; and although it *commands* love, love is *never produced by a command*. Hence, under its authority, the motions of sin brought forth fruit only unto death.

Deliverance from the law, then, is a first necessity for holiness. "But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held" (6, *margin*). And once again, why? "that we should serve in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter." No law can give, for instance, honesty, by enforcing it on men that they shall be honest. For that the heart must be reached

and set right ; while the man who acts honestly because he is commanded, is never really at heart an honest man. "Newness of *spirit*" is what is needed ; but that must be reached another way than by a law.

But an objection is started (7) : " Why, you put the law along with sin as a thing to be delivered from ; is the law, then, sin ? " Not so, says the apostle, but in thorough opposition to it, searching it out and making me aware of its existence where I never suspected it. For I should not have known " lust " to be that, only that the law forbade it, saying, " Thou shalt not lust." And thereupon, " sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of lust "\* (7, 8). Sorrowful but perfect revelation of the heart of man in its opposition to God : which, knowing not His love, deems a thing forbidden to be a thing therefore specially to be desired. This began in Eden, where one tree alone prohibited to man, hid all the beauty of the garden God had planted for him from his eyes.

But thus, by the law, the sin which lay unconsciously in the soul, as dead, was roused, and revived. The man, before with life and strength for good, as he imagined, found it all wither and collapse utterly. Sin became consciously the only living power in him : " *sin* revived ; *I* died " (8, 9). And so " the commandment which was to life,"† if man but kept it, he who proved it, *found* to be " to death." But the law thus remains a holy law ; the commandment holy, and just, and good (10-12).

But, says the soul in its perplexity, " is, then, that which is *good* made the death of that which is good, to

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\* " Lust," " covet," " concupiscence " give in the original all the same thought—" lust : " the restlessness of the human heart stretching out *after* what is denied ; fallen away from God, and from the sense of His love and power,—because, as we have it, He careth not, *we* care and crave for ourselves.

† " Ordained " (ver. 10) as shown by the italic letters, is not in the original, and is too strong.



me?" Again, no, says the apostle. It is *sin* that works death ; sin which, shewn in its opposition to the holy law of God, is seen to be exceeding sinful (13). It is only the real condition of things with me which the law has shown.

And then follows, from verse 14-25, that chapter from the personal experience of one vainly but earnestly seeking after the righteousness of the law, which has found such contradictory interpretations at the hands of theologians. The connection, however, with what has preceded, is not obscure, and should guard from all mistake as to the general meaning. As we have already seen, the apostle is not here showing the impossibility of the law justifying, but of its enabling us to bring forth fruit to God. The experience before us is not therefore the experience of a man seeking justification by it, but holiness. That it is not the state of an unconverted man, "dead in sins," is very plain. That *he* should be able to say, "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (17), or again, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (22) is simply impossible. Conscience might, even in the unconverted, assert the rightness of the law, it is true ; but that is not the man having "delight" in it. To have that, the soul must have been quickened ; a new nature must have been received. And this agrees with the place in the epistle which this experience occupies.

On the other hand, that we have not here the proper condition of a Christian, should be just as plain. If a Christian is "carnal" (14) it is not his necessary or proper condition surely. If he is "sold under sin"—a slave to it, as that means,—then he does not yet know "redemption," which is release from it. It could not be said to such, "being then *made free* from sin" (vi. 18), which ch. viii. 2 gives us as the termination of the

condition here described : " the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath *made me free* from the law of sin and death."

But take the truth comprised in ch. vi. 14, and all is plain. " Sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under the law, but under grace." Here we have a soul proving the opposite of this. Sin *has* dominion, because he *is* under the law. It is not given as the condition of all Christians, but the contrary. The change from " we " to " I " shows this. " *We* " know that the law is spiritual"—all know that ; " but *I* am carnal,"—not all Christians but a person's case supposed.\* It is a soul in its experience under law, not dead to it. The man is renewed, and the bent of his mind is changed. The goodness of the law he consents to ; keep it, he cannot (14-16). Sin dwelling in him masters him, spite of himself. He repeats in his earnestness, that it is spite of himself (19, 20). Although converted, and renewed in desire, he is occupied with himself and so finds nothing but the " flesh," the old nature, and no good dwells there (18). There is a *law* of sin in his members (21-23). He is captive to it,—unwillingly ; and that is the felt misery of his condition. Helpless utterly himself, he has to cry out for deliverance to one outside himself (24).

All this is the necessary effect of a position under law. It occupies you with yourself. It says, " Thou shalt," and " Thou shalt not." And it puts you upon working yourself out of a bad condition of soul into a better one. On the other hand, *God's* plan is never to occupy or satisfy you with yourself, but with Christ first and last ; and when you find you cannot mend yourself, to leave

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\* It matters nothing whether the apostle's own or not. That it was not the apostle's at the time of writing is quite plain from ch. viii. 2 before quoted, in which the deliverance found is recorded.

self under the condemnation of the cross of Christ. He died for you, and that was therefore your death—judgment pronounced and executed upon you. If you live now, it is in Christ alone you live. God has given you a place of acceptance with Himself in the Son of His love. See yourself by faith as what he has made you in the Beloved, and you cannot want to better that. Instead of trying to improve self, you have but to yield yourself up unreservedly to the enjoyment of what Christ is, and has done, for you. It is while “we with open face behold the glory of *the Lord*,” that we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Self-occupation is the necessary result of legality,—of being in conscience under law, for “the law is not of faith” (Gal. iii. 12). “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” is the only proper result. From this point the *new* experience—the experience of *faith*—begins: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (vii. 25). But wherein, then, does the deliverance consist? In this, that while “with the mind I myself am serving the law of God,” and yet “with the flesh the law of sin” (vii. 25), I find that “there is now *no* condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus”\* (viii. 1). For faith the old self I was occupied with, and trying to improve, is gone. I see myself *alone* in Christ. Thus my condition is indeed changed, for now I can say, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath *made me free* from the *law* of sin and death” (viii. 2). But a moment since it was self and its misery—no power but that of sin; now, the power of the Spirit, of Him through whom life in Christ is mine, lifting me up into the reality of what I am in

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\* The oldest MSS. with the mass of modern critics and editors, leave out “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It has crept in from the 4th verse, no doubt.

Him, has broken the power of sin and of death. "The law could not do" this: "it was weak" for holiness, because of the flesh, the "sin in me" which rebelled against it. God has come in in another way. He has sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, but as a sacrifice for sin. That which I find in me has had its condemnation on the cross. When we see that, and the meaning of it, the *righteousness* of the law"—the thing it aimed at, but could not produce—"is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (viii. 3, 4).

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### ANSWERS TO SPECIAL QUESTIONS.

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(1.) In Rom. vi. 2, the Christian is said to be "dead to sin": why does the Holy Ghost say also, then, in verse 11: "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin?"

*Ans.*—Because we may have the position itself before God, and not have the *faith* of the position in our own souls. Now, if I am "dead," because Christ my substitute died for me on the Cross, I am to understand it to be so, and take the place of being dead, myself. On the one hand, God reckons me so; on the other hand, I am to *reckon myself* so.

(2.) What is meant by "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," (2 Cor. iv. 10)?

*Ans.*—It is the practical remembrance that what the world gave Him,—the place which in grace He was content to take for us—was death. And as is the Master so is His disciple. We are "dead with Him," for faith, even while in the world. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." To realize His death in its relation to the character of our walk down here, is to bear it about in the body.

## THE WORK THAT CAN SAVE

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No one would question the fact that Christ is risen, yet many deny practically that He has accomplished the work which He came to perform. But if He be risen His work is accomplished. God raised Him in proof thereof.

To be plain, what is Christ? The Saviour. What led Him from the glory in which He dwelt with the Father? The work of our salvation!—Has He performed this work? Surely, and His resurrection and glorification bear evidence of the fact. As He said, (in John xvii):—"I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." He had finished the work, and on that account sought, yea, could justly claim, the place which He had so willingly surrendered.

Now, the great controversy between God and man is this—not that a work is to be done for salvation—but who is to be the workman? Man considers that he must accomplish the work. If he should not overlook the blood of the cross altogether, he deems it necessary that he add something of his own to it. Hence he makes resolutions, turns over a new leaf, undergoes some kind of spiritual penance, struggles religiously with more or less earnestness, all according to the sense of his need. Yet, blessed be God, all this effort is as unnecessary as it is unavailing. Harken, dear reader, to the clear sounding notes of the precious and perfect substitute, "*It is finished.*" His was the effort, His the death-struggle, and His the triumphant victory. Look for a moment into the sepulchre where His body was laid. Is that body there? No—the tomb is empty and its captive free! He is risen, oh! sound His praises.

Death abolished, Satan vanquished, sin put away, the sword of justice sheathed, and heaven's portals thrown open.

Let us go to the drunkard—see his hopeless case—look on his sin-shattered frame, and think of his soul steeped in despair. Poor man, thou art sadly undone; thou hast fitted thyself for hell; but say, is there no hope for thee? “Ah no,” he responds, “I have sinned away my mercy, and nought can I anticipate but a drunkard's doom; the work which could take me to heaven would be far, far greater than I could do.” Stay, poor soul, and listen to the voice from Calvary—“*It is finished,*” finished even for the poor besotted drunkard.

Let us travel to a heathen shore and witness the devotion of the worshippers of some unknown and loveless deity. Conscience seems to tell them of needed sacrifice and hence their cruel oblations. Human victims are laid on their altars, and the outraged deity is thus courted and appeased. Oh! stop their wild delusion by the liberating and life-giving cry, “*It is finished.*”

Let us visit the subjects of priest-imposed penance, and see the honest yet mistaken professors of a corrupted christianity labouring thus and otherwise to fit themselves for the favour and smile of God. What means all this toil? “So much forgiveness for so much labour,” they gloomily reply. Stay! have ye never read, has it been carefully concealed from your souls that “*It is finished?*” Away with your beads, and fastings and money-bought indulgences and hear the shout of deliverance—“*It is finished.*” Finally, what heard we from the lips of one nearer to us in answer to the question of his hopes of heaven? “I'm doing my best.” Nay, then, what meaneth the word of the dying Deliverer, “*It is finished?*” What room is there for thy doings if He hath done all? and blessed be His name, *He hath done*

## THE WORK THAT CAN SAVE.

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*all.* Yes, the judgment all borne, the stripes all laid, the wrath all undergone. "It is finished." Sinner, believe, live, enjoy, and adore.

Do not these tidings fall sweetly on thy soul, poor lost one, that since Christ has done all, nothing is required of thee? The work of the Saviour in its own solitary dignity meets the claims of thy Creditor. God is satisfied, perfectly satisfied! His word proclaims forgiveness, on the ground of the blood that has been shed. Say, art thou not satisfied? Canst not thou rest on that ransom price which answers the divine claims? See, Christ is risen, the receipt of the debt fully paid. Look and live. God asks thee for nought, for *it is finished*—finished for all, for the drunkard, the heathen and the formalist, so that, as they are, salvation may be theirs. I say boldly there is nothing for the sinner to do, for "*it is finished.*" If the saint be called to work, and surely he is, he works because he is saved—he works from salvation, not for it—from life, not for it. He stands on Christ alone for salvation, and being in the race-course he runs for the prize.

Sinner, believe! saint, rejoice and labor.

J. W. S.

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The very smallest space between the head and the members would destroy life; how close then must be the union with *Him*!

If I could say, I am a better man than when I began life in Christ, it would be only because I see more of my own vileness now than I did years ago.

You never find a man ashamed of a false religion; yet you will often find Christians who have got the truth and who are ashamed of it.

## “TAKE SALVATION.”

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WE sing it in our hymns ; we press it in our gospel-preachings. We do well to press it, too. It is the testimony which the Bible echoes and re-echoes,—the testimony to the freeness of the salvation which Christ has wrought out, and which grace brings for every man. “Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat.” “Let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

The responsibility of every one who hears this joyful sound is to be enforced surely. The good news of the gospel claims the obedience of men to it at least as fully as the law could claim it. And the penalty of refusal is no less terrible in the one case than in the other. Refusal of the gospel has indeed no remedy. Those under the curse of the law have deliverance provided for them in the gospel ; but “if we neglect so great salvation, how shall we escape ?”

We do well to press it, because there is such a thing as “dead faith.” And instead of being a rare thing, it is most fearfully common. Men assent, oh how easily ! Unchanged by it, totally, men can learn the Gospel off quite well, and be correct and orthodox, and zealous for it. We need to insist upon a direct personal dealing of the soul with Christ. We need to tell them that no mere hearing of the truth will suffice ; that a faith which leaves men still short of coming for themselves to Him, leaves them short of salvation, short of eternal life ! “Ye will not *come to me*, that ye might have life,” was the point of the Lord’s rebuke to men in His day. And no way can you “take salvation,” beloved reader, but by taking it from the hand of Him, the Saviour.

Yes, it needs to be enforced that men may believe a



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doctrine, any doctrine, and be short, nevertheless, of a faith that saves. "He that believeth on Him," alone "hath everlasting life." And he that believeth on Him, cometh to Him. These are his own parallels: "He that *cometh to Me* shall never hunger; and he that *believeth on Me* shall never thirst.

Beloved reader, what dealings has your soul had with the Christ of God? If "faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone," what has it wrought in you? Has it ever stripped and beggared you, and brought you a poor helpless sinner to the feet of Jesus? Be assured, that is its first work:—I had well-nigh said, its mightiest. A wondrous and blessed thing it surely is for born Pharisees, such as we all are, to be put in company with him who is as Pharisee of the Pharisees, made a pattern for us all—in company with him, gazing up from the dust of that Damascus road into the full-orbed glory of the One so glorious there.

My reader, have you been "in the ditch" with Job, and your own clothes abhorring you? Have you found *all* your righteousness—every sort and kind—but filthy rags? Have you been in the famine of the far-off country, and learnt how little you can fill your belly with husks that the swine do eat, and found out then, that you were away from your Father? In a word, have you been "LOST?"—needing, oh how much, Another's arm to save?—Another's perfect work to rest in before God? That is repentance: the complete come down of self-righteousness in the presence of a holy God. Very different from what men fain would have it, the dressing up of the soul in those very "righteousnesses" of reformation or of promises to reform, which Scripture calls "filthy rags." Oh reader, repentance is a much deeper and more serious thing than all this put together. You must *abhor yourself*, if you would be upon Job's level in

this matter. And "except you do repent, ye shall all perish." So says the very Saviour Himself.

But there are again souls that have reached, in measure at least, this condition, who need to have it pressed upon them yet that they "take salvation."

They are anxious to do it. Alarmed and self-condemned, they would gladly accept the Lord's offer of rest, but they are now taken up in such a way with the very thought of "coming," that they are thrown far off from the realization of rest. Those words which should be their sweetest encouragement and assurance become to them the very cause of the greatest anxiety. What is "coming to Jesus?" Have they done so? Have they accepted the offer of the Gospel? Have they closed with that gracious invitation? They may come and take—so the Word says,—but how? And all the while they cannot doubt that they would indeed be only too glad to have the very thing which He is holding out to them. They are taken up with the "appropriation" of the blessing so intently that they miss the thing they seek.

Now what is the truth for such souls? This, that *in the sense in which they take it*, they need not "appropriate" at all. Let a soul take its place before God in the simple confession of sin and nothing else, God "appropriates" Christ, that is, makes Him over for the need of such. "If we confess our sins"—simply that; not, bring our promises, nor even confess our sorrow, but "confess our sins"—"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i.) What is this, and how is this? Why "faithful"—why is God *faithful* to do this? The answer is easy: because Christ died for *sinners*, therefore the moment I come and put in faith my sins before Him, I am putting in my claim to that precious blood which "cleanseth from *all* sin." It was shed for sinners; I bring Him (because I

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know that) simply the evidence that I am one. He is *faithful* then to forgive. I may be sure He forgives. Christ is "a propitiation for the whole world" (1 John ii. 3). That includes me of course. I come then and plead my title to the Saviour of sinners. What can He do but justify my claim,—the claim of faith, as it needs must be? Yet I look not at my faith, but at my sins.

And as for "coming to Jesus": what is "the heart to come," but "coming"? Is it not what He sees in the heart He values? How can I come in any other way but just in the going out of my soul to the Deliverer? If I know Him such, and know my need, I cannot refrain from coming. One look to Him out of our misery; one cry to Him who alone can save; he who has so looked, so cried—has *come*.

But you have not got rest, you say, perhaps. That may be true; but you have got *title* to it. And now, that you may enjoy it too, you have only to "take" what you have title to. The question of your title to it is what you really wanted settled. Now you know your title, it will be easy for you to take hold of and enjoy it.

If you are a sinner and He died for sinners you have title to Him. If you have brought your sins to God, because you know it is so, He has forgiven you. His righteousness and faithfulness are your assurances of this. Take then the blessedness of this:—

"Take salvation;  
Take it now, and happy be!"

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A man is always under law when he refers his acceptance to his own state of soul.

The moment we step *out of* nothingness, we step *into* it.

Works before life, and *for* life, are "dead works."

## THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

(Continued.)

A large number,—I might say, the largest number by far—of the texts which seem to imply the possibility of the soul being lost that has once believed unto salvation belong to a class of which 1 Cor. ix. 27, furnishes the most striking example. It is thus the passage most frequently of all upon the lips of objectors. They ask commonly, the moment you speak of being safe for ever,—“Was not Paul himself afraid of being a cast-away?” But the text says nothing about any *fear* he had. It does say this, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.”

It would be poor work to seek in anywise to blunt or evade the force of such Scriptures. They have their use most surely, in the Divine wisdom which inspired them. But just precisely because they have, we must enquire the more carefully what exactly they *do* mean. The word of God will bear the strictest and most thorough examination. Precise accuracy will only be shunned by those who either on the one hand have little faith in the perfect inspiration of every word of it, or else fear to face honestly the full light of truth.

Now it is remarkable upon looking at such passages as that before us, that they none of them put things in the way which would be simplest and easiest to put them, supposing eternal life or salvation were things that might be lost. They do *not* say, “lest, after I have been saved, I myself should be a cast-away,” or, “lest, after being born again,” or, “lest, after having had eternal life, I myself should be a cast-away.” Such passages are not to be found anywhere in Scripture, and surely, that is to be marked. How easy for Divine wisdom to have settled the whole question for any honest

believer, by a single sentence of that sort ! But there is nothing of the kind. The supposition in the text is, that one who had "*preached to others*" might *himself* be a "cast-away." But who doubts that ? And who doubts, or *ought* to doubt, that, as there is a way of holiness, which leads to everlasting life, on the one hand, so there is on the other, a way of sin, of *unholiness*, of license to the lusts of the flesh, which if a man takes, will lead him to eternal death ?

If we were to question this, we should have to deny some of the plainest passages of Scripture. Take 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, for example : what can be plainer ? "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall *not* inherit the kingdom of God ? *Be not deceived*"—and this, mark, is addressed to professing Christians,—"*neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers,*" and so on, "*shall inherit the kingdom of God.*"

This is most plain and most weighty. It makes it quite plain that the gospel is not intended to be an allowance of sin, but salvation *from* it. Where really received, it brings a man *out* of the things it finds him in, and sets him in the way of holiness. As the apostle goes on here : "*And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified,*" &c. And again, as in Titus (ii. 11, 12) : "*the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared, . . . teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world.*" The grace which saves, makes holy.

This is not limiting the freeness of the gospel, nor diminishing its fullness. It is only the maintaining its real character and power. It is not that we are brought under legal conditions. It is not that we are told, that we shall be saved if we walk aright ; but that God has saved us, that we may walk right. In the words of

Eph. ii. 10, "we," believers, "are His workmanship; created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained (or, as in the margin, prepared) that we should walk in them."

Thus God has linked together in the simplest and most decisive way, without in the least weakening or modifying the previous assurances of His grace in the gospel, "good works" with salvation. But in this way that those created anew in Christ are at the same time created unto them. If then the loudest profession of faith in Christ be associated with an ungodly walk, Scripture teaches me how to form my judgment of that profession. It tells me that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). It teaches me that I am not to dishonour the precious gospel of grace by allowing that it has taken effect in the salvation of a soul, where it has not at the same time changed the heart and life.

Now this is precisely one important use of such passages as that we are considering. He who saw, even while these epistles were being written, the evil at work—and who *foresaw* the immense mass of false profession which has since come in,—has left these words, and such as these, on record, to test the reality of it all, and that He might not be dishonored by the ungodly lives of mere professors being taken as what His gospel might, if not *produce*, at least permit. "Faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone" (Jas. ii. 17): so does the word of God fully teach. We must not put down others, nor must we expect to be put down *by* others, as true believers, truly saved ones, except as the power of that grace which saves is seen in its purifying influence upon the walk and life.

Thus there is a way which leads to life, and a way of death. No matter what your creed, "to whom ye yield

yourselves servants to obey, *his servants ye are* to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom. vi. 16).

This is the key to the language of the apostle in 1 Cor. ix. 27. Addressing, as he does, "all that call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord," whether at Corinth or elsewhere (ch. i. 2), he tells them for himself that he was one who was upon this way of life. He kept under his body, and brought it into subjection, not tolerating its lusts nor walking in fleshly indulgence, in order not to be a "cast-away," i. e. one rejected or reprobate. He had no fear of being such. He took the way which led him heavenward, joyfully and confidently, "not uncertainly." He knew the grace which had called him with a holy calling, would not fail to carry him through. He knew that God had saved him already, and given him, *not* the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. i. 7, 9). And he yielded himself up intelligently and joyfully, to be led along the way of holiness unto "the end, everlasting life." If any, professing faith in Christ, were doing otherwise, he meant to warn them by his example, what faith did for the soul who had it: because only "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God."

This in no wise implies, that those who are sons of God may cease to be so by refusing to be led of the Spirit. That is mere human argument, and of the poorest kind; for not only do plain Scriptures, as we have seen, forbid the supposition, but it is in real opposition to the passage itself; for (it tells us) the sons of God are those who *are* led. And there is nothing said in the whole context to show that continuance is at all in question. Those who are sons are simply marked out from those that are not.

It is quite true, too, that true children of God may,

alas, be dull and careless, and poor followers of such a leader. They may fall and get bemired with the slough of sin. I dare not say, what a believer might not do, if not cleaving closely to his Guide and strength. What David did, what Peter did, are solemn warnings for all time. Still one easily discerns that these were things the result of sloth and self-confidence, fallen into, not sought out, and from which He who had them in His care recovered them. *Characteristically*, even of a David or a Peter, surely we could say, they were led of the Spirit of God, and manifested to be His sons. At a particular moment, they might not manifest what they were. But it is only of what is characteristic this text in Romans speaks. It is the determining for us where the line is to be drawn between those born of God in reality and those only assuming to be so: a rule we may not in many instances be able to apply, but which has none the less immense value, because it frees the gospel (as I have already said) from that charge of giving license to sin, which men are always ready and eager to bring against it.

How many would object to us in that way, their own supposition, (which they have no title to make,) of believers falling into open sin, and going on, and dying in it; and then turn round on us with the question, Would such an one be saved? To all that the one sufficient answer is, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." You have no right therefore to make the supposition: the latter part of what you suppose, would (for me) make entirely untrustworthy the claim to *be* a believer.

These passages, then, are guards against the "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness:" a thing which Jude notices as done in his day, (verse 4,) and which certainly there is no less danger of in the present. On



the other hand, legality is never a real guard of holiness, but the destruction of it. "The strength of sin is the law:" and to put the fear of falling away before a soul, in order to keep him right, is only to pervert the whole character of his life and service. Just so far as he takes up the motive we present to him, he becomes really one living to himself, in a religious way no doubt, but none the less really, and none the less offensively to God. The love of Christ, it is assumed, will not keep me straight, except a large measure of self-love works along with it! What a dishonour to Him, and what a lowering of the whole character of God's work in the soul of a saint! Except I am in danger of eternal damnation, I shall be sure to go wrong. But the Lord says, "If ye love Me, keep my commandments;" and the apostle, "though I give my body to be burned, and have not love," ("charity" in the common version,) it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 3); the apostle John again, "There is *no fear* in love" (1 Jno. iv. 18). How does all this agree with the advocacy of a principle essentially and necessarily a principle of fear? for if there is danger of being lost, I ought certainly to be afraid of it.

There are some other texts, nearly akin to the standard passage in Corinthians, which we may now take up. I believe we shall find, if we have got hold of what has now been before us, that we have already the key to the understanding of these also. In Col. i. 22, 23 for example: "to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight, *if* ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Or again, in Heb. iii. 6: "whose house are we, *if* we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end;" and verse 14: "for we are made partakers of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Addressing a number of professed Christians, these "ifs"

had their right and necessary place. Men *were* giving up faith in Christ, as this epistle to the Hebrews conclusively shows. The warning was perfectly in place. Nor could men be saved while giving up this faith. Drawing back from Christ would be drawing back unto perdition. Yet this same apostle could in the selfsame epistle put those who had believed unto salvation in a different class altogether from those who could so apostatize: "*we* are not of them who draw back into perdition"—not simply "*who have drawn back*," which there could be no need to say, but "*who draw back*:" we are not the sort of people who do that—"but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul:" that is the class to which we belong, and it is a different one to the other.

Most clearly then the apostle did not mean that *such* believers, positively saved ones, could draw back to perdition. It was needful, on the other hand, to warn professors about it for two reasons at least. First, because the giving up of Christ put outside the possibility of salvation altogether, for none else could save. Secondly, because it was, and is, important, that men should not rest in a faith they had, or thought they had, in times past, which was not true for the present moment. Faith that I had faith once is not faith in Christ, and may be a dream of my own. Just so, the vain argument that "*I was converted once, and therefore*"—which is vain because it is a mere belief in what my heart may have deceived me. If I am trusting my conversion or my faith, the event may prove I had neither. If I trust *Christ*, *He* cannot deceive, and so I am safe. "Blessed are *all* they that put their trust in *Him*" (Ps. ii. 12).

There was need to guard a point like that: to prevent men putting "*I trusted*" for "*I trust*." "*I trusted*," is my own thought of what I did. "*I trust*," makes Christ indeed the object of that trust. Therefore it was needful

to say, your confidence must be a thing held fast, if you are to be presented blameless in His sight at last.

Belief there might have been, of a certain sort, in Christ, without its being to salvation. Such faith, never having been of Divine workmanship, had a natural tendency to wear out and come to nothing. We see many instances in every one of the (so-called) "revival" movements. Nor are they a proof necessarily of anything wrong in the preaching which produces them. The Lord gives us in Matt. xiii. plain assurance that where the true seed of the gospel is sown, and He the Sower of it, such things will occur. There will be cases such as his who "heareth the word, and anon (immediately) with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but *dureth for a while*; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, bye and bye he is offended." Such a man believes: he is not insincere, not a hypocrite; simply, the Word, like seed in stony ground, has no *root* in him: his heart, never ploughed up by conviction of sin, remains in unchanged hardness. The joy in him was too "immediate;" there was no finding out of self, no taking the place of lost, that Christ might save. He believed a doctrine; never came to Jesus. He had joy; not peace. There was no change in the man himself, and no root: mark! it was not what had root that withered, but because it had *no* root it withered away. It would not have withered, had it had root.

Scripture then, which teaches that there is such a thing as "believing for a while," teaches too its character. And while we see the need of the admonition as to the necessity of continuance in the faith, we see also abundantly that those who believe to the saving of the soul belong at all times to a different class from those who draw back unto perdition.

[*To be continued, if the Lord will.*]

## A HEAVENLY AND AN EARTHLY PEOPLE.

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THE Church is not to be the means of the conversion of the world at large. It is a company of people gathered out of the world, pilgrims and strangers always in it, a heavenly people, partakers of a heavenly calling, with a hope laid up for them in heaven, and an inheritance reserved in heaven for them also. The course of this world is against them always. Watchers during the night-time of their Master's absence, no day dawns for them until He comes, and when He comes their home is to be where He is, in the Father's house, according to His promise.

From these, the simple Scriptural assurances, Christians have departed in two different directions. Some have substituted the hope of the world's conversion for the expectation of the coming of the Lord from heaven; while others (and their number is increasing in the present day) imagine for themselves an earthly portion and inheritance after the Lord's coming. Many of the early Christians no doubt held this view; and it gave but too much occasion to those who "spiritualized" away the "blessed hope."

Strange enough it is, that those words of our Lord to His disciples upon His departure from them, which are found in John xiv. 3, should not be enough to settle the question for ever with all His own. For plainly He tells them there of His *going away* to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, and that then He will come again, and receive them to Himself—surely after He has prepared it—and not only so, but that He will come for them, that where He is—His own eternal dwelling-place—there they may be also. Could that be an abode on earth? It is impossible, if words are capable of any distinct and certain meaning.

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No, our home is above. No "*reigning upon the earth*" will hinder that. It is much to be feared, however, that with many, the thought of where we are to *reign* has but too much displaced the thought, the more precious thought, of that blessed home, where surely the affections of the saint should centre. Yet it is easy to see, that if I say, "the Queen of Great Britain reigns in Canada," I do not mean to say "she lives there," which would be contrary to the fact. So with us, there is no real opposition between a home in heaven and a reign on earth. Both are Scriptural truths, and in nowise contradictory.

Want of clearness as to this has led many into the very same system of interpreting Scripture upon some points, which they are foremost to condemn when it is applied to others. The hope of Israel is the possession of the earth, and that as the foremost people upon it, in the day of millennial blessing. It is *Israel* that is to blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit (Isa. xxvii. 6). The blessing yet in store for them is as plainly spoken of throughout the pages of the Old Testament prophets, as is the judgment under which they lie at this present moment. But the cry is, with many who would utterly reject such interpretation of the Lord's coming (and rightly too), "Oh, you must not take it literally." Why, if I take such a passage as Micah iii. 9-12, the curse is literal enough—confessedly so—and has been literally fulfilled. Zion *has* been "ploughed as a field;" Jerusalem *is* "become heaps;" the "mountain of the house" *has* been given over to idolatrous worship like "the high places of the forest." Am I to believe, that when I pass on to chap. iv., and read how "in the last days" the mountain of the house shall be exalted, the law go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, that now, it is another mountain

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of the house, another Zion, another Jerusalem, that the prophecy without break or pause has brought me to? Am I to believe that the blessing shall not be as literal as the curse?

Or again, when the Lord, by Jeremiah, assures us that the sun and moon shall as soon cease from the heavens as Israel cease from being a nation before him for ever; and when he prophesies the restoration of their city "from the tower of Hananeel to the gate of the corner," not to be plucked up or thrown down any more for ever (Jer. xxxi. 35-40),—am I to believe that the substitution of the Gentile church for the people of Israel will in no wise touch the truth of this prophecy, nor contradict that assurance so solemnly and positively given?

If I may take then what the Word of God so simply and fully declares here, *Israel*, so long dispersed and downtrodden, will be the people so blessed of the Lord in the earth, in that day when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover it. To *them*, the very people for whose unbelief at that time, he so mourns, the apostle tells us these Old Testament "promises" belong (Rom. ix. 4).

How completely this is true, through the whole course of this first division of the inspired Word, from Genesis to Malachi, we may, if we will, easily convince ourselves. The prospect for the future, however bright and blessed, is through all these books an earthly one. No promise of the Father's house greets us there. No heavenly inheritance beckons us above. Nowhere do you get beyond the utterance of the Psalmist: "The heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's; but the *earth* has He given to the children of men" (Ps. cxv. 16).

A fair inheritance, doubtless, that would be, if freed from the rack of human evil. Nor is it a Scriptural thought that the earthly condition is one that is ever

utterly to cease. Beyond the passing away of the heavens\* and earth that now are, there remain for eternity "new heavens and a new *earth*, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter iii. 13). So we are plainly told, and this, if weighed, would surely correct many a hasty thought about a future which God alone is competent to reveal to us. If there is to be "a new earth" in the eternal state, there must certainly be inhabitants for it, and those inhabitants doubtless also men, as Rev. xxi. 3 clearly implies. Still, as I have already said, earth is not that "Father's house" which the Lord has gone away from earth to prepare for us. Our blessings as Christians are not only "spiritual blessings," but "in heavenly places" also, those same heavenly places where God has set Christ our Representative at His right hand, and where He has thus "made *us* sit together, in Christ Jesus" (Eph. i. 3, 20; ii, 6).

There are then plainly, not only for the future, but for the *eternal* future, as well earthly as heavenly promises. The earthly promises are those of which the Old Testament, so far as its plain language goes, *only* speaks. They are Israel's promises; though the nations of the Gentiles will enjoy them also in the end, as the Word of God fully declares. On the other hand, no less than ourselves, the saints of the Old Testament times will find their eternal home in the heavenly places. To such a heavenly home Abraham with others plainly looked forward, and their hope is not to be disappointed. This, however, as to them the *New* Testament alone plainly declares.

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You may live to yourself as religiously as possible, and Christ be outside it all.

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\* "The heavens" here are very plainly the lower heavens of the second day's work—the firmament or atmosphere.

## KEY-NOTES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

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THE EPISTLES TO TIMOTHY give us the Church as the House of God simply (1 Tim. iii. 15, 2 Tim. ii. 20). The thought of the Body of Christ is no longer before us; but that of God's dwelling-place, where we have to walk individually as becomes His holy presence. Hence "godliness," "holiness," "good works," &c., are characteristic words; but "truth," "doctrine," "the faith," are no less cared for. The "elders" or "overseers," who are to see to the maintenance of these things, and, to a less extent, the "deacons" also, find their special place of prominence in this way in the first epistle; while in the second, the break-up of this godly order is as striking and characteristic.

"Doctrine," as the basis of all "godly edifying," is the very first thing noticed in the first epistle (i. 3-5). Legality was the great hindrance, taught by those who had "swerved from" a "pure heart and a good conscience," as well as "faith unfeigned" (6-11). In his own person, Paul was the living proof of the opposite principle of grace to the chief of sinners; and his case was no exception to God's rule in general, but contrariwise a "pattern" case (12-17). Timothy, marked out in a special way by prophecy, had the charge of maintaining these principles at Ephesus, "faith and a good conscience" being kept united. Hymenæus and Alexander were examples of those who, having put away the latter, had made shipwreck of the former (18-20.)

The instruction as to this charge begins with ch. ii. First, the character of God as a Saviour, desiring the salvation of all men, was to be maintained by his people in their prayers and thanksgiving for all (1-7). Then the distinctive place of man and woman was to be maintained according to the original pattern in their creation, upon



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which the fall was an instructive commentary (8-15). Next come the qualifications for the overseer's office, (again the enforcement of godliness)—and then those of the deacon (iii. 1-13): all this as what suited the house of God, and would show the power of "God manifest" in Christ, the secret (hidden from the world as to its own experience of it, and which they must learn from others) "the mystery," that is, of all true "godliness" (14-16).

Then follows the solemn prophecy of apostacy, in which faith and conscience would be together wrecked. It would be devils' work, hypocritically upsetting the order of nature, and denying the goodness of what God had made and instituted from the beginning (iv. 1-5). Of this Timothy was to warn them, and to take heed to himself as well as his doctrine, that he might both save himself and those who heard him from the dangers round (6-16). Instructions follow as to what was due to age (v. 1,2); the relief of widows (3-16); honour due to elders, &c (17-25); the duties of servants (vi. 1,2); finally, exhortations as to riches and love of the world. The connection between truth and godliness is insisted on all through.

The second Epistle is a striking contrast to the first, as showing the godly order of the first broken through and lost. All these second epistles (except Corinthians) are supplementary admonitions in view of the evils of the last days coming in, and the general departure from both truth and godliness. Here already things were in ruin. All in Asia had departed from Paul (i. 15); the house of God could only be now compared to a great house, wherein there were vessels to dishonour as well as honor (ii. 20). Already you are told to purge yourself from the former, if you would be the latter (19-21).

Amid all this, individual faith shines out more bright-

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ly (i. 3-7, 16-18). The truth and grace of God abide (8-12), and the wholesome words of apostolic teaching are to be held fast, not only believingly, but "in love" also (13); and, in the strength furnished by the grace of God, to be communicated the more earnestly to others (ii. 1, 2), spite of hardness to be endured, which only put the more upon Christ's path (3-13). Already fundamental truth was being denied, and false doctrine bringing forth ungodliness; and this would be so more and more (14-18). Yet God's foundation stood; although christians were now little distinct from the world that had come in amongst them, the Lord knew His own, and His path was, to depart from iniquity, purge oneself from vessels to dishonor, and follow righteousness, love, peace with the pure-hearted (19-22), in gentleness and meekness instructing even opposers (23-26).

The picture of the last days which follows, shows no recovery from that condition which the church had fallen into, but perilous times, when all the lusts of the heart should be covered with a cloak of godliness (iii. 1-10); real godliness persecuted still, and evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse (11-13). In the midst of all the Word of God abides in all its supremacy and sufficiency for the soul of the saint (14-17).

With such a prospect before him, the man of God was to go on, in view of judgment coming upon the whole scene, holding forth that word men set aside, and preferred fables to (iv. 1-5); and that the more because the voice of the living apostle was now to cease. Only the example remained of one in constant warfare, forsaken of men but strengthened of the Lord, and with the crown of righteousness now laid up for him.

Precious and important lessons for our days, which we shall do well to take heed how we hear.

## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

ROMANS (*Continued.*)

THUS it is when, and so far as, self-occupation has ceased with us, and Christ in glory, made of God unto us righteousness, has become for faith the measure of what we are, that we find power for a holy walk. Leaving self under the condemnation of the cross, it is our privilege to occupy ourselves with Christ, and to *forget* ourselves. Then the joy of His love becomes our strength. We drink in, and the waters flow out. We become conscious, not of our holiness, but of Christ's attractiveness, and we become the more holy, the happier we are in Him. His care for us leaves us free to care for Him. Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed unto his image, from glory to glory.

And this it is to "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (viii. 4). In the legal effort after holiness in the 7th chapter, there was no mention of the Spirit at all. The path in which *He* leads is no more that of legality than it is that of immorality. The following of Christ from choice and desire, not because you must or ought, becomes your happy portion. - You "*are* after the Spirit;" therefore you "mind the things of the Spirit" (5). The walk is changed because the heart is. "Newness of spirit" is yours. You are free to follow the instincts of your new nature, as led and empowered by the Spirit of God. And "the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (5-7). What is the necessary consequence of all this? That "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (8). What is the remedy? The Spirit of God, giving us through the work of Christ deliverance from the old ground of being men in the flesh altogether,

and lifting us up unto our place in Christ. "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (9).

What is the consequence of this? Why, that "if Christ be in you," while indeed "the body is dead, because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness." The body here is not "the body of this death" (ch. vii. 24), nor the "body of sin" (ch. vi. 6), but just what we ordinarily mean by that, and which does not yet share in the redemption of the soul. "We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (ver. 23). The body, not yet a "spiritual body," but linking us with the old creation scene around, is for faith therefore, "dead, because of sin." If we allow it to guide—to have its own will or way, it will lead us into sin. We have to keep it under, bring it into subjection. Our life is no more in the indulgence of the senses and appetites, but one which is really such, because a life of righteousness, the life communicated by the Spirit of God (10).

Nevertheless the body also will be yet quickened with this life from God, and delivered from all the power of death by that same Spirit that is already dwelling in us, the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead (11).

To live after the flesh, then, is the way of death; to mortify through the Spirit the deeds of the body, the way of life (12, 13). In this way the real sons of God are manifested (14); but those upon this path are not in the bondage of legal fear, but children with the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit bearing witness with their spirit that they are such: children and heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, to whom if a path of suffering be appointed, it is that suffering with Him, they may be glorified also together with Him (15-17).

In the meantime we *do* suffer, and the Spirit of God which we possess, makes us intelligently to participate in the groans of the groaning creation, which waits for its deliverance from the bondage of corruption, at the very time too when our bodies being redeemed we shall be manifested fully as sons of God (18-25).

Moreover now, for the present time, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," interceding in us when we know not even what to ask for as we ought, and that with groanings which if they cannot be uttered are yet "according to God," and intelligible to Him who searcheth the hearts, and knoweth what the mind of the Spirit is (26,27). And then, if in our perplexity we do not know what to ask for as we ought, yet "*we do know*," this, "that *all* things work together for good to them that love God, to those called according to His purpose. That purpose is, that Christ shall be first-born among many brethren (28, 29). For these, therefore, predestination, calling, justification, glory, infallibly succeed each other. God being for us, who can be against us? He who gave His Son cannot withhold anything. Who can lay a charge against the chosen ones of God? He justifies, and who can condemn? Christ dead and risen again intercedes for us in the place of power: who shall separate us from His love? Suffering for His sake down here, this can certainly not separate; but neither can death; no, nor life, though naturally much more to be dreaded; no, nor the spiritual powers leagued against us; no, nor yet *anything*, present or to come; height, depth, nor any other creature—shall be able to separate us from that love, which divine in nature, "the love of God," has found at once its expression and its perfect justification, as manifested towards us in that Son of His love delivered up for us, Christ Jesus, our Lord.

*[To be continued, if the Lord will.]*

## “BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN.”

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The “mourning” here is not about this or that thing, specially; still less is it over our own sins and failures. We have such no doubt to mourn over; but the Lord’s words here seem to indicate something much more than even the “godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.” Such sorrow will no doubt be found in the one who possesses the character above-named; but that is very different from giving to it any such meaning as “Blessed are the penitent.” No doubt there is blessedness in being such.

But the Lord never mourned in such a fashion clearly, and He was a mourner throughout His life, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;” and I may say that the thing that fitted Him to know that sorrow which He did so well know, was the very fact that he could *not* know any thing like penitence. Knowing no sin,—having nothing in Himself to mourn over,—He had fellowship with God unbroken and unclouded. He came from God,—went to God,—was in the world solely as the doer of His Father’s will, the seeker of his Father’s glory; in this to learn the whole extent of the ruin into which man had fallen, and bring help to one who had “destroyed himself.” What a scene for the Son of God to come into, upon such an errand! that He had nowhere to lay His head,—that men denied, blasphemed and crucified Him,—that was the manifestation of that lost condition which the death of the cross alone could reach. He bore it all in sorrow and in suffering in his soul all His life through, as at the cross he bore its *penalty*. Nay “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” Not a thing that He relieved but He felt it; and felt it as the fruit of the sin which had blasted a creation once so fair. That sin itself, to Him who could detect it in its most

hidden shapes and read it in the very heart,—aye, in the hearts of those who followed Him most nearly,—what a constant cause of terrible suffering it must have been, we can little (alas) any of us understand.

Are they not "blessed," who can mourn with Him? To *judge* sin, in a certain way, is very easy. The world itself can do so. Every one can judge it, when it is his neighbor's and not his own. On the other hand to treat it lightly is just as easy, and a thing too which we often cover with the precious but abused name of "grace." But to *mourn*,—to weep in secret places over it,—to bear it as a burden only to be relieved by casting it on God: *that* is what is "blessed" indeed, for it is Christ-like. It is what true and divine love alone is capable of. It is what unites the real judgment of evil with long-suffering patience. It is one most real and necessary part of fellowship with God: a God so holy that He who knew no sin must be made sin for our salvation; a God so gracious as to give His own beloved Son that we might be saved.

Turn where you will in such a scene as this, and how shall we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, not "groan within ourselves?" The world going on to judgment; the Church sunk down almost to the level of the world; the truth everywhere corrupted or opposed or neglected: where are our hearts, if we are not mourners? But if heaviness endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning, yea, with "the bright and morning star." We sorrow not without hope. Soon shall the day break and the shadows fade away. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

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## ANSWERS TO SPECIAL QUESTIONS.

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(3.) In Rom vi. 7 we read : "he that is dead is freed from sin ;" and in 1 John i. 8 : "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Now the Christian is dead, and yet he cannot say, he has no sin ; how then is he dead ?

*Ans.*—Paul speaks of a place given us by God in Christ, and of the result of Christ's work for us, only known by faith. His words in Rom. vi. 7 are, as in the margin, "he that is dead is *justified* from sin." Sin, whether the nature or the fruit of it, cannot be charged upon one who has died with Christ, and for whom all has thus been settled.

John on the other hand speaks, not of position, but of what we are still, looked at as men down here, although converted men. He is showing how people "in the light," which shines upon them and manifests them, *see themselves*.

These are the two lines of truth, always kept distinct in Scripture, and needing to be kept so by ourselves when reading it : the work of Christ *for* us, and the work of the Spirit *in* us.

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WHAT a thought for me, a poor vessel carrying the incorruptible seed—that Christ is watching to lift me over every difficulty, to enable me to overcome. The only way to be an overcomer is just to have faith in that Christ of God. God can trust Christ to get us over all difficulties and extremities. God is using the wilderness as the place where every step leaves traces of His mercies. The whole place recalls to God the way He led each believer on to His paradise ; the very difficulties being an occasion of nearer association with His Christ.



## ENTER YE IN AT THE STRAIT GATE.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—Matthew vii., 13, 14.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house hath risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence ye are."—Luke xiii., 24, 25.

I have put these two passages together because of their evident similarity, and because thus connected they throw light upon each other, and help to explain some things much misunderstood, from error as to which mischief has resulted.

The words are figurative, plainly. The time was not yet come when the full Gospel could be spoken out. Yet, now that that time is come, it should not be hard to read the counsel and the warning, which the Lord is giving in them. Let us ponder them seriously, beloved reader, and God give us eyes to see, and ears to hear.

The last passage is an answer to one of those questions with which men perplex themselves; or which they bring up sometimes as objections to the "narrowness" of Scripture truth. "Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there *few* that be saved?" The Lord answers it with a home-thrust at the questioner himself. "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate;" to which He adds, that many would "seek to enter in, and not be able." It would have been too much to expect that so solemn a warning, joined with the figure which He uses as to the entrance into the state of salvation, should not be taken to imply some hardness of the terms of admission, some effort to be needed to overcome the difficulties in the way. Yet the Lord mentions none. He urges on men indeed to "*strive*," but the reason for this appeal for earnestness is evidently based upon another motive altogether, than that of there being difficulties in the way. The need for urgency is

this: "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath *shut to the door*." That might take place at any time. But the straitness of the gate was not at all in question there. It was a *shut* gate that was to be dreaded, not a *strait* one.

This also explains as simply as possible, how "many would seek to enter in and not be able." It was not because the gate was strait, but because it was *shut*. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to *stand without* and to knock at the door." Then it is, therefore, they seek to enter in—too late, if the gate were ever so wide; and He says, "depart from me."

In like manner the passage in Matthew exhorts to "enter in at the strait gate," but there is still less even the appearance of any one being excluded by its straitness. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that *find* it." The difficulty, it is true, is of another sort from that in Luke. It is not the door being shut, but men mistaking which it is: the broad way of destruction being taken for God's narrow way of life.

This makes the picture of that "broad way" exceedingly solemn. Many have, no doubt, the thought of its representing the way of vice, and open irreligion, as opposed to the narrow way of holiness. But closer consideration will convince us that it is not so. For no one expects, though he may be careless about it, the way of sin to lead heavenward. Whereas the Lord plainly intimates this to be what the writer of Proverbs speaks of,—"*a way which seemeth right* unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (xiv., 12). The question is of *finding* the way of life. Hence the solemn warning to "beware of false prophets," which follows hereupon; men who would lead those listening to them upon the broad way of death.

"Few there be that find it." The great company of heavenward wayfarers, as they would consider themselves, are thronging another road, congratulating themselves even, it may well be, upon the number and respectability of their companions. As they said in the days in which these words were uttered:—"Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? but this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed."

One stood among them whom they knew not. The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not; He came unto his own, and His own received Him not. To as many as received Him, to them gave He authority to become sons of God, even to those who believed in His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—(John i., 5, 10-13).

And who received Him? Alas, not they who, like those Pharisees, following after the law of righteousness, and seeking it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, *stumbled at that stumblingstone*. (Rom. ix., 32). They enquired about God's works that they should work. They knew not that this was the work of God, that they should believe on Him whom God had sent. (John vi. 28, 29). And if we listen to His own declaration concerning Himself, who is He? "The way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Him." And again, His own words are, "I am the door of the sheep; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved."—(John x. 9).

Thus, if there are not *two* "ways" to life, and He says there are not,—the "narrow way" is Jesus Christ Himself; and if the "gate" and the "door" are not dissimilar in what they represent, the "strait gate" is

Jesus also. And men miss salvation, not because the terms upon which it is to be had are so hard, nor because He is so unapproachable, but because, alas, men slight Him still, and seek out other ways of approach to God by which they may glorify themselves as good moralists and keepers of the law; and "the publicans and the harlots," as He told the Pharisees of His day, "go into the kingdom of God before them."

If you will but look a little further down the page, both in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, you will find the truth of this interpretation brought out fully. For in each place we find the many, so strangely (to themselves) excluded from salvation, standing face to face at last with the Saviour-Judge, and what is the point whereupon that exclusion hinges. Here we leave the Pharisees of the Lord's own time behind, for *they* were *plain* rejectors and enemies of His, and there could be no doubt in the minds of the disciples to whom He was speaking of the rejection of such as these. No, it is a home-thrust once more for professed followers, people who call Him "Lord," as in this Christian day they do, and it is of these He says: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name have done many wonderful works?" Thus they have fruits of their profession too, which might seem to show even the most vigorous and lively faith, and these are the things they build on as their ground of confidence in presence of the Judge. And what says He? Not that they had not done these things. There is not the least hint dropped, that what they say is not perfectly true. That is not the point. It is here: "and then will I profess unto them, I NEVER KNEW YOU: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

"Few there be that find it." Look again at the echo

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of this in Luke. They stand without and knock at the shut door, and say "Lord, Lord, open unto us." And again from within comes the answer, "I know you not, whence ye are;" and they begin to say, "we have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets." But again he replies, "I tell you, *I know you not* whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity."

Now in all this it is quite unmistakeable, that the missing the way of salvation for these unhappy men, was just the missing the *real* knowledge of the Saviour. They knew Him doubtless in a certain way. It is evident they were professed disciples too. But as "the door" and "the way," they knew Him not. They had not come by Him to God. It is in this way all real knowledge of Jesus is obtained. They were like the crowd on one occasion thronging and pressing around the Lord, in the midst of which one needy woman came and touched though but the hem of His garment, and He said at once, "Somebody hath touched me." In that very moment a link of mutual knowledge had been formed between Him and that woman never to be broken.

Reader, do you know Him so? Is there any peculiar link, think you, between your soul and Him? Have you used Him for your need? Have you come by Him to God?

But perhaps you are still asking, "Why then a strait gate, if Jesus be the gate? Why a narrow way, if Jesus be that way? I answer, *not* because there is narrowness in the heart of Jesus; *not* because His terms are hard! They are all here, reader: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Who can say that those are hard conditions? There is not even a stipulation as to *how* you are to come. Come as you are; come with all the burden of your sins upon

you ; come with a hard and stony heart you cannot change or soften. Come; only come to *Him*; all the rest is His responsibility, not yours. "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

Why then "a strait gate"? Just because, and only because it is "By ME." Those two words, so gracious and so assuring, are yet the most rigidly exclusive—"narrow" as men would, aye and *do* say—that it is possible to conceive. "*By Me*,"—no other way, absolutely none other. Sincerity will not do ; earnestness will not do ; trying one's best, or doing one's best ; ordinances ; good works ; whatever else you please : all is excluded by those two simple words—"By Me."

And that is strait enough for souls so legal, so full of self, so proud. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, *have not submitted* themselves to the righteousness of God ; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." That submission is required, then, and until all human righteousness has come down in the presence of a righteous God, Christ will not be known or trusted in, as door, and way, and life.

"Enter ye in at the *strait* gate." Yet at that gate so strait, so mean, so little esteemed in human eyes, all that you need of rest and peace, and everlasting righteousness is freely and absolutely yours : all the value of the work of the Son of God ; all the love of one who could give His Son for you.

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What a happy people we should be if we were mirrors reflecting Christ, in the perfect consciousness of our weakness, but looking at Christ in Heaven, bearing up amidst all the evil that is coming in like a flood, because He is up there.

## "PERFECTION."

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No one who has read Scripture with any measure of attention can have failed to notice how frequently, in the Epistles at least, "perfection" is spoken of. A certain class of writers too have dwelt much on the expression, and used it in such a way as may have helped many of us to overlook its real force, and thus lose the value of the statements the word of God makes with reference to it.

I propose, with the Lord's help, looking at some of the passages which speak of this subject, in the hope that the attention of some who need it may be turned to this side of truth.

In Phil. iii. we find the Apostle using the word "perfect," evidently in two senses, (v. 12, 15). In the one case he says "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, &c." In this sense then the chief of the Apostles was not perfect, although he could say, "Brethren, be followers together of *me*, and mark them which walk so as ye have *us* for an example." In the other verse we have, "Let us therefore, as many as *be perfect*, be thus minded," &c., clearly using the term in another sense. Now we must remember that the subject of the Epistle is Christian growth and walk in the Spirit. It is *attainment*, and therefore no one, not even Paul, could say I have attained, although there were stages well marked and definite, as distinct for the Christian as the passing over Jordan was for Israel. But, however much one might know and enjoy by the way, the end was being like Christ in glory and with Him; therefore, whilst by the way, as "having this hope in Him," purifying ourselves as He is pure, yet "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it

like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself." In this sense then, even Paul had to say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." But there *was* a sense in which he could say that he *was* "perfect," and exhort others who were this also; and this perfection, mark, was a something to be attained to, and all had it not.

I need scarcely say that in still another sense every true Christian is perfect as before God as the fruit of the work of Christ, and in this way an Apostle no more so than the weakest babe in grace. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once;" and "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," is plain enough as to this.

But this is not the Apostle's subject here, and we shall see that other passages agree with this exactly.

To bring out the point in a practical way, let me put a question to my reader. Have you peace with God? The answer most of those who read this perhaps would give is "Yes. I have no doubt whatever of my acceptance, for He has made peace through the blood of His cross, and being justified by faith I have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I ask further, do you know that you are dead and risen with Christ and seated in heavenly places in Him? Yes, I know that I am in Him, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and that He is our proper and only object. This answer, which would be so often given, seems to show that all is right. There is peace and intelligence as to the place in Christ of the true Christian. But suppose I add another question, and ask, Have you this in the faith of your soul, finding plenty of weakness and failure it may be, often, for



in many things we offend all. But do you find yourself in this as a reality, and Christ really your object, and the heart free to be occupied with Him? Well, if *not*, you are not yet perfect; you are a babe, and not a full grown man.

It matters not, dear reader, how much you know. You may have gathered up truth as an abstraction, and know the teaching of the Word on almost every point; but if you are not in this place consciously you are still a babe. The Corinthians came behind in no gift, and yet were babes as to the true knowledge of Christ. And what I appeal to is your own heart. Your lips can repeat the truth fluently, it may be, but that very truth re-acts upon your conscience, and the sense that you are not living in it, hinders your walking with God in true liberty. The more conscientious you are, the more unhappy; your heart is oppressed and burdened; your path is dark and joyless. You are really under law in your conscience, and grace has lost its hold over you for the time.

And now then, dear reader, turn with me to a few passages which, while they help to detect the real secret of this state, may point to the needed remedy.

First, then, in 1 Cor. ii. 6, we find Paul saying, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are *perfect*," &c.; and then in the next chapter he goes on to say, "And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." And yet these very Corinthians were enriched in all knowledge, and in all utterance, and came behind in no gift. As to real knowledge, as to the state of their souls, they were still babes.

Again in Heb. v. 10-14, we have a similar passage.

He refrains from speaking more of Christ, in the way of unfolding His person, because they were dull of hearing. They ought, for the time, to have been teachers, but needed to learn over again the first principles of the oracles of God. They were babes, and had need of milk, and not of full age (perfect, *marg.*), so as to be able to take strong meat, (solid food). In the next chapter he urges them to go on unto perfection. It was a something to be attained to, and without the senses were exercised to discern good and evil, through which all growth comes, they might be always babes. They had never grown into their place.

If we turn to other portions of the Word we shall find that this is connected with being under law.

And first we take up Abraham, the father of the faithful, to find all this illustrated in him. He obeys the call of God to leave his father's house, and go to the land of promise. His back is turned on all he naturally found his home in, and valuing the promises of God, he comes into Canaan. His tent and altar mark the pilgrim and the worshipper, but under the trial of his faith he breaks down. There is a famine in the land, and he goes down to Egypt out of sheer necessity. The spirit of Lot was very different from this, when he chose amidst the fertility of Canaan, the well watered plain of Jordan. With Abraham it was no choice, but necessity. He had not faith in God enough to stand the trial, and he must be passed through that which would break down the flesh, to the measure of what God had revealed of Himself. In Egypt he through fear denies Sarah, the type of grace, and brings up out of Egypt the bondsmaid. His altar and his tent are again resumed at Bethel, and he clings to the promises of God. But Hagar supplants Sarah, and the enjoyment of the inheritance is attempted to be secured in the way of nature.

But the inheritance is of promise and must be by faith, that it may be by grace, and not through the efforts of nature, that we enter on the enjoyment of it. All this while no progress was made towards it, except in outward seeming, for it was the bondswoman and her son that Abraham clung to. "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee," is his cry almost in despair of getting any better way of inheriting the land. But Isaac, the child of promise, is born, and the bondswoman and her son are cast out, and Abraham is free again to go on quietly with God.

How many are in just this condition. The call of God has been listened to. His Gospel may have come to us in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, and all is bright and happy. But a little while, and the trial of faith comes, and with it heaviness; the first joy of deliverance is gone. The next step is that the world is taken up with in some form to satisfy the craving of the heart which feels its inability to be satisfied with God and things unseen. Things seen gain a prominence they had not at first; there is the journey down to Egypt, not its pleasures and vanities perhaps, but earthly, not heavenly things, and that through weakness and incapacity, not wilfulness. As with Abraham, before, grace and the soul are in a measure divorced, and the bondmaid is carried up out of Egypt as the fruit of the unbelief that caused the journey there.

And it is just here that a good many would have to confess to being, if they spoke out the truth. The bondswoman and her son are in the house, and a troublesome time it is. Many an earnest cry goes up to God from souls who have got under the power of law in their consciences, and are learning how it works wrath and death. These cries are cries of unbelief, not of faith; and their answer is not found in the way we often

expect. God will not supplement the energies of religious nature with His Spirit. The more exercised one is in this state, the worse the trouble seems to be, at times getting help and refreshment, and glimpses of deliverance that make the longing all the greater, and help to cheer the well-nigh discouraged one on; but no real rest is known. There is no joy, no freshness of heart, no freedom to turn to Him, and find relief in unburdening every care in quiet confidence in His love. And perhaps like Job to murmuring and discontent may be added in bitterness of soul a curse upon the day of one's birth. Is it so with any who read this? Does the apostle's "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice," only make you turn in upon yourself, with the humbling sense that you have not the joy he speaks of? How reproachfully too that word sounds, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?"

If this is your case, dear reader, the simple truth is, that however clear you may be as to doctrine about being under grace, yet as to the state of your soul you are under law. You have been down to Egypt and have got the bondmaid and her son in the house; no wonder you are ill at ease, and never can you know real rest until she is cast out.

Christ has lost His place before your soul, and is more desired than enjoyed. It is just here that the apostle's words come in so suitably, "My little children of whom I travail again in birth, till Christ be formed in you." Yes, this is the key to all the trouble; you have got your eyes off Christ. Having begun in the Spirit, you seek to be made perfect in the flesh. You are trying to get the old man sanctified and set right and made presentable. Unconsciously perhaps, law has been taken up to do this work—not *the* Law perhaps,

but law in principle—*requirement*, and not faith's simple acceptance of the truth of God.

Long ago perhaps, when God taught you that you were a sinner first, you set about to establish your own righteousness, but after fruitless efforts to do that you gave it up as hopeless and found that Christ was made unto you of God, righteousness. The sense of this may have been well nigh lost in the conflict that has gone on, still you know that He is your righteousness and you are justified from everything. Now you have to learn another thing—that just as He is your righteousness, so is He your Sanctification. God has made Him this to you. This is the wisdom of God. But how slow we are to learn it! How slow proud nature is to bow and own its utter worthlessness in God's estimation; and so in ours as taught of Him. The apostle tells us that Christ is the wisdom of God; and when he explains and sums up what this wisdom is in connection with us, we are told, He is made unto us both righteousness, and *sanctification* and redemption, that, according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the *Lord*.

It is He Himself who tells us: "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified through the truth." In the glory of the Father there sits a Man, the life of those who come by Him to God. Faith's knowledge of and occupation with Him by the Spirit is the power that detaches from the world and is the judgment of the flesh. We with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. The acceptance of God's judgment upon "our old man," that it was crucified with Him, and of our place in Christ now where there

is not only no condemnation, but no separation from His love, and the simple occupation of the heart with Christ as our object, is the power of Christianity. "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

It is this the apostle means by "perfect," and yet with still plenty to be attained to before one. But perfect in the sense of being no longer a babe, but grown up to manhood; where, having judged the flesh, and entered into the knowledge, practically, not theoretically, of my place in Christ, I can feed upon His perfectness, and seek to apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ.

"Let as many as be perfect be thus minded, and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, *God shall reveal even this unto you.*"

R. T. G.

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## THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God."—Rom. viii. 16.

It is worthy of note that it is after the apostle has dwelt fully upon the doctrines of justification by faith, and of our place in Christ, that he speaks of this witness of the Spirit of God with ours. He first establishes the soul in Christ Himself. He leads it away from dependence upon the feelings, workings and experiences upon which we are so prone to build, or seek to build, for peace. And he shows us that for fruit also, no less than peace, we must be occupied with Him, who is the only object for faith from first to last. And after having thus enabled us "to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us" according to Scripture itself, the only sure and infallible authority, he

speaks of the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit to this blessed fact, that we are children of God, and if children heirs, &c.

Now, first of all, what is the witness of *our* Spirit with which the Spirit of God bears (as the word means) *joint* witness? Many have taken it to be the evidence of our lives, the fruits of the Spirit in us; but this is completely opposed to the whole line of the apostle's argument up to this. Christ, not our fruits or evidences, is our peace; nor do we trust in Him for salvation as *saints*, but as *sinner*s, (see ch. v. 5-10). The Spirit of God does not occupy us with our own virtues or graces, but with Christ, and that equally for salvation, peace and holiness.

If we turn to 1 Cor. ii. 11, we find however the "spirit of man" as that part of man to which all human understanding is ascribed. In Matth. xiii. 23 moreover the "understanding" of the word of the Gospel is marked as the distinctive feature of those who received the seed into good ground. Now no man has this understanding naturally; the Spirit of God must work in him to produce it (1 Cor. ii. 14). But where this Divine understanding of the Gospel exists, the sinner learns what Christ has wrought for sinners, learns what has made peace for him with God, and rests in Him to whom he is assured of welcome.

He has thus the evidence of his *own* spirit, that he is a child of God. The word of God has given him a sure ground of confidence; and believing God's record about His Son, he sets to his seal that God is true.

Upon this faith in Christ the Spirit of God now puts *His* seal: "in whom after that ye had believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 13). It is then not merely that I have Scriptural reason for my hope.

I have the Spirit of God Himself, possessing me with the consciousness of my blessed portion. Scripture still abides as my *justification* of the hope I have,—justification, whether to myself or others. And thus I am clear from fanaticism, and from self-deception. The “joint” witness of the Spirit with *my* spirit, is practically the witness of the Spirit and the Word.

And this is in perfect harmony with the general tenor of Scripture. Everywhere you find in it how the Word and the Spirit go together, where there is true work in the soul. The “water” and the “Spirit” of the 3rd of John, (explained by Eph. v. 26, and 1 Pet. i. 23, 25), link these together in the work of our new birth. Elsewhere, because so acting by the Word, the Spirit of God is Himself called “*living water*” (Jno. vii. 38, 39). Again, if sanctification is by the Spirit, it is also by the “truth” (Jno. xvii. 17). Nor are we to believe every Spirit, but to “try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 Jno. iv. 1), assured that the true Spirit of God will not fear the test of His own Word.

The witness of the Spirit is not then a mere feeling or emotion of which I can give no account. This is most earnestly to be insisted on. Once separate it from the witness of the Word and you are open to the grossest possible self-deception; you supersede that which is the light unto the feet and lamp unto the path; you land in a world of, it may be, fatal illusion.

On the other hand, the witness of the Word itself is feeble and inefficacious, even in the heart of one truly born of God, except there be along with it the joint-witness of the Spirit. It is this that makes evident how by grieving the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption (Eph. iv. 30), we may fail to make sure (to our own souls) our calling and election, and become such as are blind and cannot see.



afar off, and forget that we were purged from our old sins (2 Pet. i. 9, 19).

In a word,—

Christ witnessed to by the Word is the alone object of faith, and just as much for peace as for salvation itself. We trust *Him*, and as sinners ; not our evidences, fruits, or faith itself. And it is while resting in Him and occupied with Him, the Spirit gives its witness with our spirit that we are His,—children of God and heirs, joint-heirs with Christ Himself.

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## • THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

(Concluded.)

There are yet some passages, however, which require special notice. Thus undoubtedly, Heb. vi. 4-8 furnishes us with the example of hopeless apostacy ; and the previous condition of these apostates is described in terms, which appear to many altogether too strong to apply to unconverted professors merely. They “were once enlightened,” had “tasted of the heavenly gift,” and been “made partakers of the Holy Ghost,” had “tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” It is just this which makes their case so hopeless, that all the goodness of God, as displayed in Christianity, has been, so to speak, spent in vain upon them. Or rather, it has been as rain from heaven nurturing only thorns and briars in the unfruitful soil. Yet, the apostle adds, as to those in whom he *had* seen fruit (verse 10), “beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak,” (9). Thus, again he carefully guards himself from being misunderstood to mean that those whose faith had works, and had thus proved itself a living faith, could so fall away.

This alone for really simple souls, might suffice as to the whole passage. It surely ought to be enough to hear the apostle say, that, although he is speaking thus, he is persuaded better things of those who have shewn "work and labor of love toward His name." Yet it is all well to enquire, in its place, from what the men before us here apostatize. But observe again, then, there is no mention of their having been born again, or converted, or justified, or saved; or having had forgiveness of sins, or eternal life. Of none who are declared to be in that condition is there ever any doubt of their security, or any hint that after all they might be lost. On the contrary, the thought is carefully guarded against, as we have seen.

But as to these:—

They were "enlightened." And "the true light *lighteth* every man which cometh into the world," (Jno. i. 9); but that that is not necessarily saving knowledge is plain. There may be conviction where there is no conversion, as every day shows. Yet how perilous to turn from the light which has thus borne witness to our souls!

They had "tasted of the heavenly gift," and "of the good word of God." But so had he who received seed upon the stony ground: he "immediately *with joy* received it." We see that too, often. The word is welcomed; it is not *understood*. Only "he who received seed into the *good* ground is he that heareth the word, and *understandeth it*" (Matth. xiii. 23). It is possible thus to have a false peace patched up, and to find joy in a gospel, which after all has never been apprehended by the soul, and has never brought forth fruit in it at all.

Besides this, they "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," and had tasted of "the powers of the world to

come." This last expression refers to miraculous powers,\* and the "world to come" is literally the "coming age." Here, as elsewhere, it refers to the millennium, when the signs and wonders which signalized the early days of Christianity will be repeated. The prophet Joel (ii. 28, 29) witnesses of this; and his prophecy the apostle Peter could take up at Pentecost, and apply to what God did by His Spirit at that time. Yet the prophecy itself, however much it might take in Pentecost, goes on to the restoration of Israel in the last days. Miracles could therefore fitly be called "powers of the coming age." But we have the Lord's assurance that men might *thus* be "partakers of the Holy Ghost,"—prophecy and do miracles, (which could be done only through the Holy Ghost)—and yet after all He might say to them, "I *never* knew you," (Matth. vii. 22, 23). It is clear, therefore, that in this sense they might be "partakers of the Holy Ghost" and yet be lost. The spirit crying "Abba, Father," in us, is another thing. Those who are thus "sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise," are "sealed to the day of redemption," (Eph. i. 13, iv. 30). In this case, therefore, there is no possibility of being lost.

We see then, that what we are assured by the constant tenor of the word of God, and by the very context of the passage itself, *must* have been the condition of those who are spoken of as drawing back to perdition, is confirmed by the very terms by which they are described. For none of these imply that they were either born again or justified. They had now openly given up Christ, and by going back to the ranks of those who had crucified Him, "crucified to themselves the Son of

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\*The word (*dunamis*) in the plural is only used either for "miracles," (as ch. ii. 4, for instance), or for angelic orders, "principalities and powers," or once in the expression (Matth. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 25, Luke xxi. 26): the *powers* of the heavens shall be shaken."

God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." It is open apostacy that is in question, going back to the Judaism out of which they had come, and what hope could there be for such?

The "wilful sin" of ch. x. 26, is plainly of the same nature. People were forsaking the Christian assembly, (ver. 25), taking the place of "adversaries" to Christ (27), treading under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant by which they had been "sanctified," (or set apart as Christians,) an unholy thing. They might say perhaps, "Well, after all we have God's own appointed sacrifices still." But the apostle answers, that upon that ground "there remaineth *no more* sacrifice for sins," nothing that has virtue to cleanse a sinner, but on the contrary "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries."

There may be those who read this, who may be otherwise troubled at these verses, and I cannot refrain from adding a word for such. Many do not see that the hopelessness of the state of those described consists in this, that they have given up the only ground upon which salvation is possible. It is not mere failure, getting into the world or into sin, that these verses speak of. It is the wilful rejection of Christ as Saviour. They crucify Him afresh, trample Him under foot, count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. In a word, it is not any mere ordinary back-sliding, as I have said, but apostacy from Christianity itself; and that is hopeless.

Beside this, there is another thing. The "impossibility" spoken of in Heb. vi. is impossibility to renew them again unto *repentance*. There was no impossibility in their being saved if they *did* repent. The word remains ever true for all, while this day of gospel grace

lasts, "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If any one *will*, therefore, he may. No sin is unpardonable to such, or can shut him out from the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

But I pass on to the consideration of another example of apostacy which is given in 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Now here again there is said to have been "the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" in those who, without doubt, "draw back unto perdition." And not only so, but this knowledge had had effect upon them, for it had drawn them out of the "pollutions of the world." Yet it does not require any very close attention to the apostle's words, to discern here also how little he conceived these apostates to have ever been true Christians. Why had it passed into a proverb that the dog would return to his vomit again, and the washed sow to her wallowing in the mire? What did such a proverb mean, but that a washed sow *remained all the while* a sow, and that, inasmuch as the washing had not changed her nature, she would go back as a matter of course to her old habits? It was simple enough to know she would. And so one who had in the same way been merely washed from the *pollutions* of the world—from defilements from without,—but whose nature was never changed, might be expected to fulfil that proverb.

But now mark the difference, as pointed out in this same epistle, where there was true faith. Speaking of

those to whom that knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord was indeed eternal life, he describes them as "having escaped," not the pollutions merely, but "the *corruption* which is in the world through lust," (ch. i. 4). Here the need of the soul had indeed been divinely met. It is not in this case external pollution merely, but the "lust," the internal corruption of the heart, that is dealt with. Christ is known as the rest and satisfaction of the soul. The heart is changed; with a *new* nature, new desires, new affections have come in; and there is no proverb, that if a sow be turned into a sheep it will go back into the mire.

Thus then, we have looked at the most prominent of the texts, which might seem to imply the possibility of the soul being finally lost that has once believed unto salvation. It is not likely that other passages will present much difficulty, if the truth as to these is once distinctly seen. There is but one other text which I would briefly, in closing, remark upon: first, because it furnishes the very expression, "falling from grace," which is the technical one with many for their whole doctrine; and secondly, because there is not a passage which more distinctly marks the deeply important principle which is in question. The words in full are these:

"Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you *are justified by the LAW*; YE are fallen from *grace*" (Gal. v. 4).

The mere quotation of the passage ought to be enough, one would think, to expose the common misapplication of it. It is he who goes back from the grace of the Gospel to justify himself by the deeds of the law—it is this man, the legalist, and not the one fallen into immorality, or gone back into the world, who is "fallen from grace." And the meaning is not that even to such God ceases to be gracious, but that the *man* has left that ground himself.

Now it is just the principle contained in this, that is so important. What is it to be "justified by the law?" Does he who maintains that "man must do his part and God will do His," approach or not that ground of being justified by the law? Law works are not bad works. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is its first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thus the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Yet "as many as are *of* the works of the law,"—standing upon that ground before God—"are under the curse." Where then are they who suppose that *their* love to God or man, their maintenance of good works, will have something at least to do with their final salvation? Doubtless with many the language of their heart is beyond that of their creed. And there we must leave it.

Let us close with the confident assurance of the apostle's words,—the words of the Holy Ghost by him:

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were *yet* sinners, Christ died for us. MUCH MORE THEN, being *now* justified by His blood, we *shall* be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, MUCH MORE, *being* reconciled, we *shall* be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 8-10).

Christian reader, is that *your* assurance?

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Shall we find that we have experienced all Christ's love *here*, when we meet Him in Heaven.

There is no place where a wearied creature can find a bit of light save in Christ, looking up and finding it *nowhere* else.

## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

ROMANS—(*Continued.*)

IN Chap. ix.-xi., we have a needed supplement to the doctrine of the previous ones. The question is, If all be thus of grace through faith, what about the casting away of Israel, the people of God? And again, if man is simply cast upon the mercy of God for everything, have *they* no promises of which they can claim fulfilment? This question as to Israel still meets us in the present day; and the answers which it gets are various and contradictory enough. Let us try then to get hold of the apostle's argument as simply as we can.

In the first place he recognizes fully that the [national] adoption, the [visible] glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God—the ordered ceremonial service—and with these the promises, belong to Israel still and to no other. It is the very Israel over whom he mourns for their unbelief; and yet he says, to them these things pertain. Just because God is sovereign in His grace, and His gifts and calling are without repentance, not even their unbelief can change these thoughts and purposes of His. The apostle has not the idea of Israel's promises being now made over to the Church. She has other and heavenly ones. These things, familiar to the reader of the Old Testament by the names he uses, and which needed not to be more exactly distinguished from things which represent some of them in the New, belonged to Israel still (chap. ix. 1-5).

Yet in the fulfilment of these promises God had never tied Himself to perform them to people because they were children of Abraham according to the flesh. Were not the Ishmaelites—those Arabs,—Abraham's seed? And was not Esau? (6-13). And as to His being just in doing so, when all Israel had apostatized and made



the golden calf, had not God taken them up openly upon the principle of shewing mercy to whom He would? Was that injustice, when He might have cut off all? The goodness they experienced there, was not from man's willing or his running, plainly, but was God's mere mercy. And so it ever is (14-16).

On the other hand, Pharaoh had been raised up, that God might shew in him all His power in judgment. So upon whom He would He shewed mercy, and whom He would He hardened\* (17-18).

An objection here is readily anticipated: "If it be His will, why doth He yet find fault; for who hath resisted His will?" To which there is a two-fold answer: first, if He be God, He is your judge, and not you His (19-21). Secondly, if He does purpose to make example of His wrath, it is on vessels (self-) fitted for destruction, whom He has endured with much long-suffering. On the other hand, the vessels of mercy in whom He will make known the riches of His glory, are vessels before-prepared by His own hand (22, 23).

But in this case the Jew stood on no different ground from the Gentile. He called, as He pleased, both. Hosea had borne witness to the call of Gentiles; Isaiah, that not all Israel, but only a remnant of it would be saved. Had God not spared a remnant, they had been as Sodom. (24-29.)

Now comes the moral reason for the breaking off of the Jewish branches. We see at once how different was their condition from that of believers justified by faith. They on the contrary were those who zealous for the works of the law had stumbled at the stumblingstone of a humbled and crucified Messiah, suffering for men's

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\* Goodness itself may harden, as the Preacher warns us: "Because vengeance against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccl. viii. 11, and comp. Rom. ix. 22.)

sins (30-33). The real reason was that not knowing how righteous God was, they tried to establish their righteousness before Him. Whereas Christ was the end of the legal way of righteousness, that it might be the portion of every one who believed (x. 1-4).

The way of faith is then put in broad and striking contrast to the legal one. On the one hand Moses spoke of man's living by righteousness which he had himself wrought out. On the other hand God's work for righteousness was the coming of Christ from heaven down into the dust of death, and His resurrection from the dead. A work man could not think of having a hand in; but where the word as to it simply came to be believed. And wherever there was this faith, faith inseparably connected with the owning as one's Lord of the risen Jesus, salvation followed (5-9). All indeed depended upon the owning of Him in whose hands salvation was. Jew and Gentile made no difference. Faith was the essential thing, for how could they call on One in whom they did not believe? (10-15.) God's word then was that by which faith came, His report as to Christ, a report which Israel had not believed, as Isaiah, and even Moses, had foretold would be the case (16-21).

We have thus had before us, first, the sovereignty of God in fulfilling His own promises, a sovereignty exercised in goodness, and to which Israel owed their all. And secondly, the reason for the breaking off of the Jewish branches, by which we see that those broken off never believed in Christ, and certainly could be no warning as to one who *did* believe or ever *had* believed, being so dealt with. The apostle now goes on (ch. xi.) to point out that even for the present time God was still saving a remnant, so that Israel was not *totally* cast off; while, after the fulness of the Gentiles (the complete number in the mind of God) should be brought in, He

would take up the nation again *as such*, and "*all Israel*" be saved, so that "the gifts and calling of God" would be seen to be "without repentance." Connected with this are two most important points. First, that the professing Gentile body stood upon the same ground of responsibility to abide in what God had committed to them, that Israel in their day stood upon ; and would be cut off as His witness, if they did not. Secondly, that Israel's conversion and salvation would not be the effect of the present gospel, but by the coming of the Lord, the Deliverer Himself.

The apostle himself was an example of the election of grace in his day, even as Scripture had testified of it in the dark times of Elijah's ministry (xi. 1-6). As for the rest, judicial blindness had come upon them. Yet their fall was not what God aimed at, but through their fall the setting aside of their exclusive privileges, that salvation might go forth to the Gentiles, while yet that very salvation of the Gentiles might provoke to jealousy the Jews themselves (7-11). In every way, Israel was to be a blessing to the Gentile world ; even the casting away of them, the reconciliation of the world ; what should it be then, when they were received back ? It would,—it will be—as the raising of the whole world from the dead (12-15).

If then the Gentiles, grafted in among the natural branches, partook of all the fatness of the tree of promise in place of the branches broken off for unbelief, they need not boast, for the root was not with them. Faith had brought them in, and by faith they stood. The Gentile branches might be broken off, as some of the Jewish ones had been, indeed would be if they abode not in God's goodness to them. On the other hand, the broken-off branches might be grafted back again (16-24). And this was actually what would be. God would gather

out the complete number of His elect among the Gentiles ; and until this was done, blindness in part (for all were not blind) had come on Israel. After which, "all"—the nation as such—should be saved by the Deliverer out of Zion (25-27). Thus "*as concerning the gospel*" they are naturally as enemies ; treated as such by God while the gospel dispensation lasts. Still in sovereign grace and love they are remembered by Him "for the fathers' sake ; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (28-29). Not until this dispensation is ended by the coming of the Lord, and the saints are taken up to be with Him, will be the fulfilment of the Divine counsels concerning Israel. But then will they be visited ; and while the remainder of Christendom is in turn broken off as were the Jewish branches, these will be again grafted in, and "blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit."

Thus does God overrule man's sin. The unbelief of Israel is made the occasion of mercy to the Gentiles ; while it casts themselves too,\* without claim of any kind, upon that mere mercy of His, which alone gives a sure, unchangeable foundation for all blessing. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !"

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The old Christian can say to a young Christian, "you may try, but you cannot satisfy your heart with the world, for I have never found a thing in it to satisfy mine." But he could not say, "I have walked so far down the hill of life, and I cannot fail." Yet we can say, "Let all that can be brought against me, yet God will be faithful to His word, and Christ will present me faultless and without spot or blemish before Him at His appearing."

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\* Verse 31 should read : "Even so have these also now not believed your mercy, in order that they themselves may be objects of mercy."

## NONE CAST OUT.

"Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."—JOHN vi. 37.

Sweet and perfect dispeller of every doubt, full and complete answer to every fear! Balm for the wound, assurance for the heart, and a firm foundation for the soul, are in this declaration of the Saviour's grace.

What more can be needed? and how can suspicion lurk when *He* says, "him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out?" How completely do the three words, "*in no wise*" banish and scatter to the winds all the fears, all the misgivings, all the objections of unbelief—"in no wise"—on no account, on no consideration!

Unbelief—that God-dishonouring, sin-producing principle, what sorrow, what heavy clouds of darkness does it create! How it sinks the soul, marring its joy, disturbing its peace and blighting its hope. Unbelief and self are companions, close companions, too, but miserable and wretched. Unbelief has to do with self, its badness on the one hand, and its supposed goodness on the other. It circles round self and is chained to it. It never has to do with God.

Faith—the God-honouring, the divine and joy-producing principle, what liberty, what freshness, what energy, what holiness does it create! Faith, having acknowledged that self is thoroughly bad, that in it "dwells no good thing," and that it is only fit for the cross and for death there, turns away from it and has to do with God, and with what He says. Now he who lives by this principle is called a just man. "The just shall live by faith." It is said by some that they are not such great sinners as to need salvation, but it is unbelief that prompts them to such an expression. They do not really believe that they have "sinned and come short of the glory of God." And unbelief tells

them that, because they are at least equal to their neighbours in moral conduct, they therefore need not trouble themselves as to the future. In this way unbelief succeeds in deluding, and souls are lulled to sleep by thoughts of "peace, peace, when there is no peace."

It is said by others, who have been awakened by the Spirit of God to find that because of immoral, or despite of moral conduct, they have "no peace," they "have sinned" and are in themselves "lost,"—that there is no hope for them. So great are their sins, and so hard, so impenetrable, so rebellious are their hearts, that there cannot be salvation for them. This, too, is the utterance of unbelief. It knows not God, nor His salvation, and seeks to occupy the awakened soul with its sins and hardness. Such a soul knows not where to turn. Above, all seems dark; within, all feels hopeless. Not one ray of sunshine is seen.

Others, again, admit the hardness of their heart, and confess their total vileness, and see, to a certain extent, that this does not, in itself, preclude them from salvation; yet are they troubled as to the means of obtaining it. They acknowledge that Christ alone can save, and that He would suit their case, that they are called on to come to Him and be saved. Yet, knowing this, they are occupied with the manner of their coming, rather than with Him to whom they do come—with their faith rather than with the object of their faith, and hence their uncertainty, their misgivings, their fears. They belong to a class who may be strangely denominated "unbelieving believers." They are true believers, yet unconscious of their standing as such.

Upon the ears of the first mentioned class of people, the words of the Saviour fall dull and meaningless. They know not their own deep need, nor do they care for His grace. But to the second and third, those who

feel the heavy load of their sins and long for relief, and those who are occupied with the means rather than the end, their faith rather than faith's blessed Object, Christ Himself. to them do these precious words carry peace, liberty, assurance and joy.

Need I say that all the charm dwells in the "*Me*" of the verse "*Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out?*" As if to disentangle the gaze of the soul from every other object; as if to fill the entire horizon with Himself, the Lord says, "*Him that cometh unto Me*"—unto *Me*, who am the Saviour of the lost; unto *Me*, who in love untold relinquished all I had with the Father, and travelled from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross; unto *Me* who there suffered for sins, bearing their judgment, and thus taking the sinner's place, and accomplishing the work needed for his salvation, that on the ground of that all-effectual work might be proclaimed the forgiveness of his sins; unto *Me* who am able therefore to save to the uttermost, both as to extent of moral degradation and as to time, all that come unto God by *Me*; unto *Me* whose blood can cleanse from all sin; unto *Me* who stand with arm outstretched to rescue and enfold the veriest and vilest of Satan's victims. Be assured, O sinner, of the truth, the verity, the certainty of the provision of that blessed One that "*him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.*" Let thy sins no more enthrall thee. Behold the flash of Sinai quenched on Calvary. Witness the sword of justice falling on Jesus, so that the hand of mercy might succour thee, and rest assured of this, that thou, *even thou*, wilt "*in no wise be cast out*" by Him to whom thou comest.

"But suppose I fail to come in the right way—suppose my faith be one of the head, and not of the heart, that it should not be of the right kind or of the right

amount, what am I then to think?" says some troubled heart. Oh! dear soul, why perplex thyself in this way? The text does not say "Him that cometh to the right kind or quantity of faith," but "Him that cometh unto *Me*." Thou art turning thy faith into a Saviour, thou art looking for a resting ground in the work of the Spirit within thee, rather than on the work of the cross, and the word of the Lord outside. Salvation is in Christ, and not in thy faith or thy feelings, and the cause of thy trouble is to be found in the fact of the dishonour thou art thus doing—though unintentionally—to Him to whom in very truth thou hast come.

But notice that the way of thy coming is not taken into question at all, for the Saviour says, "I will in no wise cast out." He wants *thee*, for He loves thee. He wants thy confidence, not that faith which thou art really turning into a merit or purchase-price. He wants the entire surrender and trust of thy heart, and hence He says, "I will in no wise cast out." Therefore, doubt no more, trample thine unbelief under foot henceforward, and make His word of promise thy sheet anchor for ever. So that now being delivered out of the hand of thine enemies, thou mayest serve Him without fear.

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that *thy blood was shed for me*,  
And that *thou bidst me come to Thee*,  
O Lamb of God, I come."

J. W. S.

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### "PERFECT LOVE."

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Is there such a thing as "perfect love"? Clearly, for Scripture speaks of it—"perfect love casteth out fear," (1 Jno. iv. 18). But whose love is thus perfect, dear reader? Mine, I am free to confess it, is not, but very far from it, I fear. Is yours?



What would you consider "*perfect love*?" I suppose if you take the law of God as the measure and test of it, perfect love in you or me would be loving God with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and one's neighbour as oneself. And this we ought to do, no doubt. I do not question it at all. If we were unfallen, such love would be ours. The question is, who has it? who can stand the test? Whose love to God absorbs the whole heart, mind, and soul and strength? Whose love to his neighbour,—to every one of them, remember, the wide world over, is just in every particular what it is to himself? Again I ask, is it yours, reader? Before Him who is a God of truth and reality, could you claim this as your own?

Look further at the passage and its context in that fourth chapter of the first epistle of John. Is it *in us*, do you think, as possessing it towards God and man, that this love is to be found? I know that verse 17 may seem to say so decidedly, "Herein is *our* love made perfect." If you look in the margin of your Bible, you will find that the Greek says, "love with us" instead of "our love." And that is a very different thing: "herein is love made perfect with us, that we should have boldness in the day of judgment." Herein: wherein? Why in this, "because as He—as Christ—is, so are we in this world." *That* gives us boldness in the day of judgment.

What does this mean precisely, "Because as He is so are we in this world?" Morally perfect as He was when He walked this world, it cannot be. Who would venture to say of Christians in general, or any class of them in particular, that they were in this respect as the Son of God Himself? and so confident about it, that it gave them boldness in the day of judgment?

Again, it cannot be that we are put in His place or

path or circumstances down here, for that would not give boldness. Furthermore, it is not "*as He was*" when here, but "*as He is*," when now in glory. How then, are "*we*"—all Christians—"as He is?" Simply and only, because He is gone up from His work finished on Calvary, "to appear in the presence of God for us," our Representative in glory. God looks at His beloved; sees and accepts us in Him, and—"our old man being crucified with Him," our old selves and all that belongs to them being put away by His cross,—sees but the Christ in us, and what is of Christ, as we walk in the world. Thus the favour wherein He holds His beloved, rests on us as identified with him. What an antidote to fear is that! "Boldness in the day of judgment," because even now just "*as*" the Judge!

But *whose* is the love, then, "*perfected with us*" in this? Plainly not ours but God's. It is Divine love which has done it all. Perfect in itself, it is perfected with *us* in this way; and this "*perfect love casteth out fear*" indeed, "*because fear hath torment*," and love like His would not have us know this torment. Did you never see the mother hush her babe upon her breast, when some causeless fear alarmed it? It is not enough for her to know that there is no ground for the fear. Causeless or not, the fear itself hath torment, and she is not satisfied till the fear is gone. Just such babes are we, rocked upon the bosom of infinite love, and this is our lullaby, our sweet dread-dispelling assurance: "*as He is, so are we in this world.*"

But are we not too to be "*perfected in love*?" O yes! for "*he that feareth is not made perfect in love.*" That means, we ought to be, of course. But in what way ought we to be perfected in it, according to this passage? Why by drinking it in, and letting it banish fear. We are to be perfected in it as a lesson God is

teaching us. In that love is "*no fear*." Nay, it is its antipodes—its antidote. He that feareth, then, has not learnt his lesson, is not perfect in it. O to be perfect in it! For "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." What a home, what an atmosphere to dwell in, in the bosom that holds the Only begotten: in love, that is, in God; for God is love!

That love, dear reader, was towards us, ere there was one good thing in our hearts towards Him. As the apostle says again—for we are but gathering together a few fragments of his teaching—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Our "*sins*," and not our goodness, brought Him down; His own love and not ours. Thus God has justified Himself in taking up us sinners, yea, a Saul of Tarsus as the chief of sinners to be a "*pattern*" of His ways of grace, (1 Tim. i. 16). And of all that believe in Jesus is it true that "God for His great love wherewith He loved us, even WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN SINS, hath quickened us together with Christ," (Eph. ii. 5). There this perfect love found us, and thence it brought us; and for what purpose? why, to the intent "that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus," (ver. 7.) Stagger not, then, dear reader, at these "*exceeding riches*." Such they are, indeed, but then they are the "*riches of His grace*." Must they not "*exceed*" all your, and my, poor thoughts about them?

This is not forgetting holiness. The root and soil of holiness is only here, in the knowledge of this Divine and perfect love. Can a man be enjoying love, and yet not himself love? Nay, "we love Him, because He first loved us." Or can he love God and hate his brother? Nay, but he is a liar who pretends to it

(1 Jno. iv. 20). And thus the apostle shows us once again, that there is a "perfecting" of Divine love in us, when that love enjoyed by our souls is the sunshine wherein ripens the fruit of love to one another. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (ver. 12). This is a perfecting such as the seed has, when it springs up into the full maturity of plant, and fruit, and seed again. It is not that *our* love is perfected, but *His* in us; which is a very different thing. This love toward us has its perfecting, its fruition in us, when in the knowledge of His love we love again.

Thus have we the three things in the apostle's teaching here:—

*God's* love, perfect; perfected with us in this, that as Christ is, so are we in this world; and this, that we might have boldness in the day of judgment.

Secondly: *we* are perfected in this love, when we have so learned it, that fear is cast out of our hearts.

And, thirdly, *it* is perfected in *us*, when it becomes in us fruitful in love to those who represent Him for our hearts in this present world.

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## THE WAY TO THE FATHER.

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There is a passage in John xvi. which ought to speak plainly to our hearts, as showing to us how jealous the Lord Jesus is lest we should fail to enter on the full enjoyment of our privileges and place.

The manner and intimacy of His own relationship to the Father are what we are called to share, anything short of that it would not suit his love to give us. But the heart is slow to enter into all His love has made over to us, a sense of our own unworthiness helps to keep us further off in spirit than He would have us, and so long

have we been trained in unbelief and distrust of God, that it takes line upon line and precept upon precept before the fullness of His love begins to be measured or estimated aright by us.

But if we are dull learners, He is a patient teacher, and if we read how slow of heart to believe His little flock were in the days of His flesh, and know ourselves the counterpart of them ; we know too that the ways that gave character to the yesterday of His life on earth still characterise the to-day of His life in heaven and will do so for ever : He is the same.

Little as they understood the full truth of His person, yet it was a comparatively easy thing for the disciples to enjoy according to their measure their nearness to Him. But when He spoke to them of the Father it was another matter. It called for more faith and spiritual intelligence than they possessed, and hence in chapter xiv. He had to tell them that He was in the Father and the Father in Him, so that those who had seen Him had seen the Father ; besides this He was the way to the Father, no man could come to the Father but by Him.

But there was a danger still to be guarded against, and so His thoughtful love would anticipate the mistakes His loved ones would be likely to make and prevent them.

The danger was lest they should not use the liberty He had brought them into, and instead of using Him as the way to the Father, should put Him in between them and the Father ; and this would not do.

There is a sense in which we apprehend, as having taken part in flesh and blood, the Lord Jesus to be nearer to us than the Father. The grace in which he came down to our level, as far as outward circumstances went, not morally of course, has made Him in a sense nearer to us, and it is more easy for us to find ourselves free in

His presence, who, though he might have been exempt from them all, has shared our sorrows and our trials in this evil world. And this is surely as it ought to be.

But still redemption brings us to God. He suffered the just for the unjust, *to bring us to God*. His bearing our sorrows and carrying our infirmities and coming thus to us in grace, was a different thing, though a part of the same display of love, from His bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. Redemption gives us a place with God. If we would measure it we must do so in His own way, as no other could be the true measure, who tells us that, "As My Father hath loved me so have I loved you," and "That the world may know that Thou (the Father) hast loved them *as Thou hast loved Me*." In Ephes. ii. we read, "But now in Him, ye, who sometimes are afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ;" and again, "Through Him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit to the Father;" and again in iii 12 "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him."

Now it is just this we often fail to realize, and therefore the Lord's words in this xvi. chapter. He had been with them and they had gone to Him for everything, but He was going away by the cross to the Father; a little while and they should see Him no more. The world would rejoice to have got rid of one whose presence troubled it, but it would be their sorrow to lose their kind and gracious Master. But He would see them again and their hearts should rejoice; and so He did. If death and the grave hid Him from their sight and dashed all their hopes to the ground, His resurrection from the dead showed how He was conqueror over all, and that for them; and so we read, then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." We know how the hearts that had found their object in Himself would have kept Him

here, but His answer to Mary, who was foremost in devoted attention to His person, was a gentle reproof of the little knowledge of the mind of God she had, "Touch me not ! (or perhaps 'don't be clinging to Me,' is the real force of it—as if to keep me here) for I am not yet ascended to My Father, but go to My brethren and say, I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." The time was come when He should show them plainly of the Father."

Now it was just this time He was anticipating here. Redemption having been accomplished, He had declared the name of His God and Father to His brethren. He was to go to the Father and send the Holy Ghost the Comforter to abide with them for ever.

And so He says to them, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name ; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." And then He adds "At that day ye shall ask in *My name* ; and I do not say that I will pray the Father for you ; for the *Father Himself loveth you* because ye have loved me and have believed that I am come out from God." As the *way to the Father* He puts Himself before us, but we do not come as asking Him to go to the Father for us, nor in any sense as if He were between us and the Father. He would have us know that boldness of access with confidence is our privilege. Nor is it asking for His sake, but in His name. The Father Himself loveth you, and you can go freely to Him in my name. What love in this, what carefulness to guard us from drawing back from the full confidence in the Father in which He walked on earth, and in which He would have us walk too, sharing His rejection by the world, but sharing too the privileges and joy of knowing His Father as our Father and His God as our God, while waiting to see Him face to face and be with Him in His glory.

R. T. G.

## THE KINGDOM OF THE ABSENT KING.

(MATTHEW XIII.)

### 1. THE "MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM."

"Art thou a king, then?"

"Thou sayest that I am a king."

And yet, while, for Christians, there is thus and can be no debate regarding this, concerning the nature and manner of this kingdom there has been very great debate. It is with this that we have first of all to do, before we can take up the details of the parables before us in this 13th chapter of Matthew's Gospel.

Let me first of all, then, refer to a verse in Revelation, the consideration of which would, I believe, answer many of the questions, and put an end to much of the perplexity, which so many have with regard to this matter. It is in the promise to "him that overcometh" in the address to Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." (Rev. iii. 21.)

It is the Lord Jesus speaks, as we are well aware; and He speaks plainly of *two* thrones wherein He sits. In the one He sits already. The authority belonging to it He already exercises. In the other it seems implied that He does not yet sit, and we shall see in a short time that this is the actual truth; it is a throne He waits for, not yet fills.

The one is His Father's throne, the seat of Divine omnipotence and authority; and although as man, and as the One who has overcome in the mighty conflict in which He has been engaged, He is set down there, yet only as One who is a Divine being could He do so. No creature could fill or share the throne of God Himself.

But then there is another throne He *can* share with



others. This He calls here "His own throne"—a throne He fills as man, distinct from the throne of God. It is in this way that the eighth Psalm, as quoted and explained in Heb. ii., speaks of Him. "For unto angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is *man*, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." This is distinctly then *man*, as the apostle testifies, set over the "world to come." And in whom has this wonderful language its fulfilment? Why, as he further explains it, in the occupation by the Lord Jesus of that throne for which he waits: "But now we see *not yet* all things put under Him; but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." He it is to whom all this applies. He is crowned with glory and honour, and sits in His Father's throne; He has not yet all things put under Him as man, but that will be in the world to come.

Thus Scripture is abundantly clear and precise; and it is everywhere consistent. That Christ is now a King, has now a kingdom, it everywhere maintains; but that kingdom, into which we are "translated," is the "kingdom of *God's* dear Son," as the epistle to the Colossians teaches (ch. i. 13): while that which will be set up upon the earth in days to come is uniformly called the "kingdom of the Son of *man*,"—a plain reference to Daniel's vision (ch. vii. 13), and to that eighth Psalm already spoken of.

The term used in this 13th chapter of Matthew, "the kingdom of heaven," is one also taken from the book of

Daniel (ch. v. 26), and there applied to the government which God exercises at all times over the earth. Here in Matthew, however, it is plainly not that constant rule which has been always exercised by the Most High over the affairs of men, but a heavenly kingdom in the hands of Christ as King. Thus John the Baptist proclaimed it as "at hand"—a kingdom coming, but not come. So too, the Lord Jesus afterwards. Nor was it till after His work was finished, and He was risen from the dead, that He assumed openly the power of it, as when He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matth. xxviii. 18). He had overcome, and then sat down upon the throne of the kingdom.

"The kingdom of heaven" embraces both the kingdoms already mentioned: both that in which the Lord Jesus sits as King upon the Father's throne, and that coming one, in which He will take the throne as Son of man, and share it with the "overcomers" of the present time. To apply another Scriptural designation of these two things, it includes both the "kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ," (Rev. i. 9), and also His "kingdom and *glory*" (1 Thess. ii. 12). In the one case, the king is absent from us, and we suffer. In the other, they that have suffered shall reign with Him (2 Tim. ii. 12).

This leads us to the expression, "the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven." The parables of the 13th of Matthew according to our Lord's words there, treat of these "*mysteries*." And what that means is immediately explained to us by the evangelist where he says, (ver. 34, 35): "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been *kept secret* from the foundation of the world." These things

kept secret until then, but then uttered in these parables, are therefore the "mysteries" of the kingdom of heaven.

It was not that the kingdom itself was a mystery. It had not been kept secret that Christ should reign. All the prophets had borne witness to that. But if they had spoken of it, it was nevertheless but of one part of it that they had spoken. It was the "kingdom and glory" only, and not the "kingdom and patience." It was the triumphant and manifested kingdom, not that of an absent King, where the true subjects suffered, and the truest most. In a word, it was the kingdom of the *future* which they spake of, and not the kingdom of the *present*.

In that kingdom of the future, the kingdom of the Son of man, all Israel's hopes and promises are to be fulfilled. And when, under the peaceful sceptre of the One "whose right it is," all nations shall be gathered to the name of the Lord, it will be to Jerusalem they will be gathered. "At that time they shall call *Jerusalem* the throne of the Lord; and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance to your fathers." (Jer. iii. 17, 18.)

Words could scarcely be more simple, more decisive. Have they been fulfilled in any age or period of the past? No, assuredly. They wait then their fulfilment in the future. For the meantime, and during the whole going forth of the gospel, "as concerning the gospel, they are *enemies*" (Rom. xi). Such is the portion of the mass of Israel then, till the present sowing of the

gospel seed is over, and the "time of harvest," which the second parable in Matth. xiii. speaks of, shall have come.

The opening of Matthew's gospel gives us the reason of Israel's condition at the present time. The second chapter, in which the Gentiles announce "the King of the Jews" at Jerusalem, and all Jerusalem is "troubled" at the news, is already full of significance. Then in the third chapter, the Baptist proclaims the nearness of the kingdom, and bids the people prepare the way of the Lord, just ready to appear among them. He comes, and is borne witness to as the Son of God; declares the character of those "blessed" ones to whom the kingdom belongs (ch. v.-vii.); and finally manifests Himself as the One in whom dwells all the power needed to bring in full blessing for man,—complete deliverance from all that burdens and oppresses him. Disease is driven away by a touch or a word; devils are cast out; winds and waves controlled; sin itself, the cause of all the sorrow everywhere, He is there to meet,—the "Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins." The King is there—God's King, present according to promise and prophecy of centuries gone by. The kingdom of heaven is indeed at hand.

And man—Satan's poor drudge and captive,—bound with the chain of his sins in Satan's hands—how will he welcome the deliverance? with what gladness and thankfulness of heart will he hail the Deliverer? Alas, we know too well, he did not. And thus, side by side with this display of matchless power and grace, these two chapters (Matth. viii. and ix.) give us his rejection of the God-appointed Prince and Saviour. The more the glory of His person is displayed, the more emphatic only that rejection is. Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, and the Son of man hath not where

to lay His head. They pray Him to depart out of their coasts. And when He gives the manifest proof of being the One they needed, the One who could minister the only effectual help, by forgiving sin itself, they say in their hearts, "This man blasphemeth."

The beginning of the end is there reached. From thence, although neither was His love checked, nor His purpose thwarted, the path of the Son of man—

—"uncheered by earthly smiles,  
Led only to the Cross,"

Spite of all, He will be gracious; will call the publican to follow Him, and sit down openly with publicans and sinners. And, if the new wine will not do in the old bottles of Judaism, *He must have other bottles.*

In chapter x. the formal call is given to the nation to prepare for the kingdom nigh. Israel is summoned; not Samaritans, nor Gentiles. But He warns His messengers, as One who foresaw all, what they might expect at the hands of men. For He sent them forth as lambs in the midst of wolves; and the Prince of peace had brought a sword. That was their fitting portion as His followers, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his lord. And they had already called the Master of the house Beelzebub.

And now the children of the kingdom are to be cast out. In chaps. xi. xii., we have the rejection of the people for their unbelief. The Baptist had come in the way of righteousness and called them to repentance. Himself had come in the way of grace, with tidings of joy and of deliverance. They had neither lamented when the one mourned, nor entered into the joy and gladness of the other. Publicans and sinners, the poor and despised ones of the people, alone had welcomed either.

Thus the highest privileges turned to their deepest condemnation. It was woe to Chorazin, woe to Bethsaida, Capernaum lifted up to heaven, should be cast down to hell. It would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for them. .

In chap. xii. He continues the same strain of judgment, interrupted, indeed, characteristically by the frequent turning aside to the mercy which He so much better loved. But they should have no sign now but the sign of Jonas the prophet, for the Son of man must die. But while Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, they would not at one greater than he. And it would be to them, from whom the former spirit of idolatry had gone out, but like a house garnished, swept, but empty of a tenant, ready for the devil to come back and take possession of it again in greater power than ever. So would it be to that wicked generation.

While he was yet speaking to the multitude, there took place that which gave added significance to His warning words. His mother and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak with Him. But when one told Him of it from the crowd, "He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold my mother, and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

Significant words, which contain the germ of much that has been developed since. Christianity, ignoring the national distinctions of Judaism, gathered first actually out of the world this brotherhood of His disciples. The mighty change which was impending is here therefore foretold. It is the One who, "as concerning the flesh," came of Israel, disowning that fleshly relationship, That which was spiritual alone was to be recognized.

Thus the kingdom, if it was to be now set up, must take another shape from that which it took in the eyes of the prophets of old. There were "mysteries" about it to reveal: "things kept secret from the foundation of the world;" "parables" indeed to the judicially blinded Jews, but full of deep significance and value for those of whom He could say, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (xiii. 16, 17). What deep interest should words like these in our Lord's mouth, give us in these disclosures of things so long hidden,—so full of blessing in their design to those who now have given to them the privilege of hearing them!

These "mysteries of the kingdom" are the things concerning it as set up in the present time, Israel having rejected their King, and being (for the time) themselves rejected; the word of the gospel carried forth to sow new fields outside the Jewish enclosure: with that indeed laid waste, its hedge taken away, and its wall broken down (see Isa. v.) "The field is" thus "the world" (verse 38); the seed-sowing restricted by no limit of people or of country. The word is "the word of the kingdom," and wherever it springs up, the kingdom is. But the king is *absent*. Christ is dead, risen, and gone to God. The world has not known Him; and the princes of it have crucified the Lord of glory. Satan is still over all, its demonstrated "prince" and "God." Thus the word of the kingdom is sown in unkindly soil, and springs up under the eye of watchful enemies. Power is not openly put forth against them. It is the "kingdom and *patience*," not the "kingdom and *glory*" yet. Hence a strange and varied struggle of evil with

the good, until the Son of man sends forth His angels, and gathers together out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. With this the "*mysteries of the kingdom*" end; for many a prophet has told the story of the days that *then* ensue when, at last, He whose right it is, shall take unto Him His great power and reign.

(*To be continued.*)

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## THE SALVATION OF INFANTS.

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A beloved brother in the Lord has put some questions with regard to this, which it may be helpful to many to see clearly answered. As I doubt not Scripture furnishes the answer, I give those questions with a little more than usual detail.

He asks, "Does not such a statement as that in John iii. 3 (Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God) take in the whole human race, not excepting children? Could, 'of such is the Kingdom of God' be an objection to such an application?" He adds, "I can see little foundation for children being saved, simply because Jesus died for the world, and they have not committed transgression. I suppose that idea is a remnant of the old doctrine of Jesus having 'put away the Adamic transgression.' I do not see Scripture state it that way."

Now with regard to the latter point first: it is plain, if we take Scripture, that those who have not committed sin, cannot at any rate come up for judgment in the day of judgment. It is not for the possession of an evil nature that men will be judged, but "according to their *deeds*." And people are very conscious of the difference between these two things, and of their responsibility



with regard to them. Men acknowledge easily that they are sinners, and will plead even their nature as their excuse for sin; but all feel, notwithstanding, the shame and guilt of having committed this or that sin in particular. They have the sense of responsibility as to that, and that they need not have done it, however bad their nature.

The solemn account rendered before the judgment seat could never then be rendered by an infant. Nor will he be condemned for the evil nature only, or for Adam's sin, which was not, nor is ever stated to be, his.

Yet it remains true that a being with an evil nature cannot enter into heaven, or (if that were possible) enjoy the presence of God there. The youngest babe must be born again undoubtedly, just as any other. The only question can be, is there assurance from Scripture that this is the case with every infant dying such?

Now our Lord's words "Of such is the kingdom of God," have been already quoted, and are familiar to us. There again there is more than one question likely to be raised. First, perhaps, what *is* the kingdom of God? And secondly, how far do the words, "Of such is it," carry us?

Now I apprehend, a common cause of mistake lies in confounding the different aspects of this Kingdom in the present and the future. The parables of Matthew and Mark teach us that the Kingdom of God, or of heaven, now in the time of the Lord's absence, covers the whole ground of what we commonly call Christendom. Into it evil men do enter. But when the Lord comes He gathers out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and to that Kingdom which follows, (still the Kingdom of God) the Lord's words to Nicodemus alone apply. The reference in "born of *water* and of the Spirit," is to Ezekiel's promise

of God sprinkling clean "water" upon Israel, and putting His "Spirit" within them, preparatory to their entering the Kingdom in millennial days (Ezek. xxxvi.) Our Lord says (Jno. iii. 12) that it is of "earthly things" He is speaking there. Of course the same is just as true of those who are to inherit the heavenly portion of that Kingdom.

But when in Mark x. 14, He says, "Of such is the Kingdom of God," there is no need precisely to define, whether he is speaking of the present or future Kingdom. It is plain, if they could be, *according to the Lord's mind*, in the present Kingdom, they could not but be in the Kingdom of the future. It is on this ground as showing His gracious mind toward them, that He takes them up in His arms and blesses them. Could He bless and put them in His Kingdom here, and exclude them from His Kingdom of glory?

Assuredly not; for in the case of the exclusion of any, it is *their* contrary will He blames. *He* would have all men to be saved. Now where there is no contrary will to be supposed, will *His* will fail? Does not the "all men" of 1 Tim. ii. 4 extend as far as the Lord's words in Jno. iii. 3?

If any raise question as to "of such," and will set limits there,—if they say it is of people who *resemble* children He is alone speaking, I can only ask, why then did He say, "Suffer *them* to come unto me, for of such, &c." Why did He bless them? and where else is "of such" used in such a way, as to exclude the things or persons which furnish the resemblance? It would seem somewhat childish to ask, are not little children "such as" little children?

As to Jesus having "put away the Adamic transgression," we can say something better, for with John we know Him as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the

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sin of the world." Not the *sins* of the world, as some think ; that is not true ; but sin as a hindrance to God's taking up and blessing any one any where. There is no hindrance to the blessing of any one, but, alas, in his own will. And this is after all just the point with me, and where the truth and character of God seem concerned in our maintaining it ; if the "Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," and these little ones are "lost," yet with no barrier of their own will to hinder their salvation, can the will be wanting upon His part ?

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 SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

## ROMANS (Concluded)

The last five chapters of Romans it will not need to dwell much on in a sketch like the present. The first three, to xv. 7, are exhortations, simple in character, while yet exceedingly important. What strikes us in them is, how much the practical character of Christianity is shown in "self-surrender." To be called on for this, and to find actual power for it, is what belongs to us as set in the wondrous place, which the apostle has dwelt upon in the more doctrinal portion of the epistle. We are reminded of Phil. ii., "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," shown out in His descent from the highest heavenly glory to the place of the cross. That was self-surrender in the most marvellous way, surely. And we are told, aye, expected, to have that mind ! What sort of creatures must we be then, and how qualified for the greatest things in the eye of God ! The fulness of the blessing He has bestowed upon us is such, that as to all here He counts upon our ability to give it up, because we have such an over-payment of joy with Him above, which we never

shall be called upon to give up in anywise. And then His love, who has given it at such a cost, makes service sweet.

Thus then, at the outset, the apostle beseeches us by the mercies of God, that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable (or intelligent) service (xii. 1). The world is, however, round us with its contrary ways; and the flesh ready to make us value ourselves, alas, even upon the possession of those spiritual gifts which are given to us as members of the body of Christ for the common interest and blessing of the whole. To use these gifts then, (gifts, which in some shape or other, every member of the body has), simply, earnestly, humbly, in love to one another, and in service to the Lord,—is our responsibility among ourselves, (2-13). And with regard to those outside, living in peace with all, meeting and overcoming evil with good; remembering that vengeance is the Lord's (14-21).

Submission to existing governments is then enforced; *an authority appointed of God for good, and so used by Him, spite of the character of those clothed with it.* Every one is to have his due, whether tribute, custom, fear, or honor; nothing to be left owing, save that great debt of love which no payment can discharge; and which is the whole of that Divine law, the exemplar in that respect of all right human laws (xiii. 1-10).

As an additional motive to the Christian, the apostle urges the fast approach of that eternal day, to which already we belong, and to which all works of darkness are so unsuited. Christ put on, will be the exclusion of all forethought for the flesh's lusts (11-14).

Another form of self-surrender follows: a brother's weakness might make conscience of observing distinctions (as of meats and days), which God indeed once

enjoined, but which Christianity has done away. In such a case the rule was very simple. Conscience was to be respected, as a thing in which each one of the Master's servants stood responsible to that Master, and would have to give account for himself. Neither was to override the other's conscience, nor was the strong to put a stumbling-block before the weak one. It would be an evil use of knowledge to lead another upon what *to him* was doubtful ground, or to offend him. On the other hand to abridge oneself of what might be quite lawful, for another's sake, was always right; while the lawful path, if doubtful, was to him that doubted the path of sin (ch. xiv). The great principle was love, which vaunts not itself, nor seeks its own, but others' good; Christ-like, not pleasing itself, but bearing the burden of others' infirmities. Those whom Christ had received were to be received unto the glory of God, (xv. 1-7).

Finally, the apostle adds one confirming word to what he had before so much insisted on. Christ was both a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm all His promises made to them; and also that mercy might be showed to the Gentiles, and God glorified in that. This the prophets too had witnessed should be, and he, the apostle of the Gentiles, had the unspeakable joy of seeing, and being a main instrument in its fulfilment. Meanwhile Israel had not lost place in his heart, and the Jewish saints were the object of a special labour now, which if lowly, showed the more his affection for them, and the love which now united Jew and Gentile in the brotherhood of Christ.

The last chapter is occupied with salutations, warning against divisions, and closes with an ascription of praise to Him who had brought to light things hidden from the beginning of the world, making them known in prophetic writings, and preaching them as glad tidings to be received of all nations in the obedience of faith.

## A HYMN OF PRAISE.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in thee."—Is. 26: 3.

Oh God! my way is dark and troubles rise;  
Earthly friends fail,  
And foes prevail;

I see  
No earthly refuge, but I lift my eyes  
And see Thee near,  
Ready to hear  
My plea.

In Thee alone I trust; Thy love I cherish;  
Thy gracious arm  
Shields from all harm;  
I know

Thou canst not leave my trusting soul to perish:  
Tempest and Flood  
Come at Thy nod  
And go.

Thou wilt give grace and glory; all the cares  
That press on me  
I take to Thee;

Thy grace  
All that Thy child can need richly prepares,  
And matchless power  
In danger's hour  
Displays.

No ills can reach him whom Thine arms surround;  
Disease must fly—  
I cannot die;

I stand  
Firm and secure on faith's eternal ground.  
Lowly, but bold,  
I firmly hold  
Thy hand.

Then peace, my heart! though threatening storms  
And blackest night [impend,  
Shuts from my sight  
The sky—

Though heaven and earth may pass away, MY FRIEND,  
Even He whose will  
The storm can still  
Is nigh.

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Then will I cast on HIM even ALL my cares:

He clothes and feeds,

And all my needs

Supplies.

He loves to hear my praises and my prayers;

And bids me come

To my blest home,

The skies.

All storms and clouds will soon have passed away;

Then will be seen,

Bright and serene,

Thy face;

And, in the light of that eternal day,

Thy child shall know

That ALL below

Was GRACE.

—S. T. R.

Hantsport, Canada.

ANSWERS TO SPECIAL QUESTIONS.

4. Do 1 John i. 6, and ii. 11, speak of the child of God as walking in darkness, or of the condition of the children of darkness in contrast with the children of light?

*Ans.*—In both cases we have the testing of profession. The language in ch. ii. 9. shows distinctly as to the latter passage, that it is not the failure of one who was once in the light, that the Apostle speaks of, for "he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness *even until now*." Such a man never was out of the darkness. On the other hand, "he that loveth his brother *abideth* in the light" (ver. 10).

As to ch. i. 6, the very next verse, to one who knows the Gospel, shows that the apostle is speaking of the unsaved, for only "if we walk in the light. . . the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The man walking in darkness is therefore not a cleansed one. The walking in light or in darkness shows the real condition of the soul, whether cleansed or not.

## J O Y .

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What Nehemiah said to the people contains a very fine truth "the joy of the Lord is your strength." see Chap. viii. 10. Joy is strength, we may prove it every hour. And we may know it from the working of the opposite thing so often also experienced, that sadness is weakness. An observer of men once said, "A merry heart goes all the day, a sad one tires in a mile," and his words adopted this divine thought, this thought of the Spirit, "joy is strength." But it may be more. If it be *great*, it will be strength in proportion, but if it be perfect, it will be nothing less than victory. It will then be more than armour for a fight. It will lead on to conquest without any fight at all. It will do all the business for multitudes, prowess, and tactics together, by a single energy. At times it does more than give the soul an advantage and a strength in fighting with corruptions, it ensures it victory. We have an interesting exhibition of the power of joy in 1 Chron. xii. 38, 40. On that bright and animated occasion, Judah could not have provoked Ephraim, nor could Ephraim have envied Judah. A stranger had entered the scene who had authority to command these away from themselves, and to conform them both to himself. Joy and a common object alone were felt and acknowledged. David was to be made king, that was the common joy that had just entered; and one *heart* was generated by *one* object. Through the joy that accompanied that object, there was joy in Israel, (v. 40) that accounts for all this scene of allayed jealousies and private feelings, and for the presence and exercise of loving affections. None in Israel had then what are called "separate interests." Joy, perfect and common as it was, made that an impossibility. This was one of the days of heaven upon earth, (Deut. xi. 21) for in heaven, and that for ever, *joy will be triumphant*, admitting of nothing inconsistent with itself.



## SAVED.

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A THRILL of deep and unspeakable delight passed through my soul when first I knew that I was saved—that I could look on judgment on account of sin, and the burning “Lake of fire,” and exclusion forever from the blessed circle of God’s favour, as matters with which I had nothing to do. Heaven, with its glad-sounding notes of welcome, its circumstances of divine and eternal joy, and the blissful presence of God and the Lamb, was now my sure and inalienable portion. Hell, the abode of the damned, the place of retribution, the witness of “eternal judgment,” the doom of the devil and his angels, was escaped by my soul, and that for ever. I say a spring of wondrous, yet suited ecstasy, rose within me when first I understood and apprehended the story of redeeming love.

No wonder the Gospel is so called. No marvel that it means “glad tidings,” or that the dear old story is always new!

It speaks of a God so rich in mercy, and so great in love, that when He found man ruined and undone, fitted by his own sins for destruction, and treading the “broad road” that surely leadeth thereto—spared not His own and only Son—His well-beloved, who had ever dwelt in His bosom, as a Son with the Father, but gave Him up, so that He, in the value of the work which could be accomplished by Him alone, and in the dignity of his person as “God manifest in the flesh,” might take the place of the sinner’s Friend and Substitute, and lay a foundation, by His blood, for the unhindered outflow of mercy to the very chief of sinners; and not only so, but that salvation in all its deep and illimitable import should be the present and eternal and conscious possession of the man—Jew or Gentile—rich or poor—sage or savage—formalist or fallen—pharisee or publican,

who, through mercy, believes on that beloved Son, and accepts the substitution made by Him as the only ground of security. Such is some of the good news contained in that old old story—and the joy of it gladdens the heart, ever and again, of him who is the blest recipient of it. Now I say this present and eternal salvation is the conscious possession of the believer. He *knows* that he is saved. He is certified of this precious fact by that same old story. The Gospel makes it known to him. This knowledge of salvation does not consist in his feelings, his holiness, his attainments, nor even in his faith. True, it is made good to him on the principle of faith by the Spirit of God, yet the work of his salvation was performed outside of all those things, on the Cross of Christ—and the channel of information is the Gospel. Thus, “he that *believeth* on the Son *hath* everlasting life”—Jno. iii. 36. Again, “these things have I written unto you who *believe* on the name of the Son of God that ye may *know* (it does not say ‘*feel*,’) that ye have eternal life,” 1 Jno. v. 13. Hence, taking the word of God as it stands, without question, doubt or fear, he is in conscious possession of salvation.

“Stop a moment,” says some one, “we are told, ‘he that endureth to the end shall be saved’” Mat. xxiv. 13. True, but look at the context! In three verses further on it says, “let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” This, therefore, has an exceedingly local and limited application, and has reference to the Jewish nation in its affliction. But again “we are saved by hope” Rom. viii., and also, “now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” Rom. xiii. What of these? Is not salvation future—surely it is, when, as in Ch. viii., the still unredeemed *body* is in question, “we wait for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body,” or when the final and ultimate completion of our faith is made good, when body and soul

shall be delivered from each earthly power, and our absolute and full redemption shall have been made good. I may say that in Romans salvation, intending that of both body and soul, is viewed as future—albeit the believer *is justified*, is beyond condemnation and at *peace with God*.

- But again, must we not “work out our own salvation?” Phil. ii. Surely! but working *out* and working *for* are widely different, and it is because these Philip-  
pian believers could be addressed as *saints*, being saved already, that they were therefore enjoined to give evidence by holiness and obedience that they were indeed the “sons of God.” But suffer me to quote a few clear passages showing us that salvation is the present portion of the believer.

“By Him all that believe *are justified* from all things.” Acts xiii. 39.

“Being justified by faith we *have peace with God* Rom. v. 1.

“Unto us which *are saved* it is the power of God.” 1 Cor. i. 18.

“Ye are washed, ye *are sanctified*, ye are justified.” 1 Cor. vi. 11.

“We *are* all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Gal. iii. 26.

“By grace ye *are saved*.” Eph. ii. 5.

“As sons of God.” Phil. ii. 15.

“Giving thanks to the Father who *hath made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.” Col. i. 12.

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” 1 Thes. i. 4.

“Who *hath saved us*.” 2 Tim. i. 9.

“He saved us.” Tit. iii. 5.

“By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Heb. x. 14.

"Of His own will begat He us." Ja. i. 18.

"Receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of your souls." 1 Pet. i. 9.

"Beloved, *now are we* the sons of God." 1 Tim. iii. 2.

"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and *hath* made us kings and priests of God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion." Rev. i. 5.

Overwhelming is the Scriptural evidence to the fact that salvation is the present portion of the Saint. It is likewise eternal—for "when *Christ* who is *our life* shall appear then *shall* we also appear with Him in glory." Col. iii. 4. Or again "my sheep shall never perish" and "none shall pluck them out of my hand." Jno. x. Christ is the solid rock on which the house is founded, and, as He says, it shall stand.

Dear reader, if, through grace, you are a believer, let me assure you that salvation is yours, and that for ever, by the authority of the faithful Word of God.

And I would therefore urge you to "rejoice in the Lord," and from your place of divine security in Christ go forth to manifest Him in your ways on earth. If you are not saved by your holiness, you are surely saved to be holy. If your works could never make you a child of God, you are called on to work because you are one. Thus it is that "*life* and incorruption are brought to light by the *Gospel*." What may have been dimly foreshadowed in the Old Testament, is now fully revealed, as the precious result of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, and His resurrection and ascension to God's right hand.

And, blessed be God, this salvation is *free*. "Unto you is the word of this salvation sent." Beloved reader, does it not meet your need? Then I pray you accept it

## THE GROUND OF ASSURANCE.

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and spend your henceforth in the joyous service of such a Friend and *Saviour*.

J. W. S.

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 THE GROUND OF ASSURANCE.

Rom. iv. 5.

"To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Many a sincere soul is perplexed by the question, whether his faith is of the right kind or not. Granting, as we must, that there is a dead faith and a living faith, that "faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone," and that even the devils may believe, after a certain sort, without it being any sign or evidence of good in them, the natural thought is therefore to look in upon oneself, and find out whether our faith is such as saves or not. Even apparent Scripture may be quoted, and often is, for self-examination upon this point, as for instance, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves;" a text upon which many a sermon has been preached with most false application, inviting Christians to continual *doubt* under the specious pretext of *making sure* of their Christianity.

For it is plain, that if the apostle, writing to those already accepted as Christians, invites them yet to examine and see, if such they really were, he supposes them to be in doubt upon the point, or else that they *ought* to doubt; and if this be a right thing to urge upon all Christians, as he urged it upon those at Corinth, then they ought never to be beyond doubting. And thus the plain inconsistency of such a recommendation is seen, and that what is called making sure of salvation would be really making all *unsure*.

The fact is, that those who make self-examination the

way of assurance, are compelled in most cases to own that upon that very ground none can be *quite* sure. For is not the heart "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" And if people object that that is only true of those who have not a *new* heart, even allowing that, we may well ask: Is it not in the case before us just the question to be answered, whether we have the new heart? We have no right to take for granted the very thing to be proved. If our hearts *are* new, there is of course no question as to our being "in the faith." If there is doubt about that, there is very grave doubt as to whether we shall get a proper answer to any question upon that point we can put to them. Scripture asserts, as a broad, general truth as to this, that "he that trusteth his own heart is a fool."

But then, what about the apostle's exhortation? Just this—which may be said of many another thing apparently brought from Scripture, it is *misquoted*, because only *half-quoted*. Reproving the Corinthians for the doubts they had begun to entertain as to whether Christ had indeed spoken by him, he puts it to them that *then* they must question their own Christianity. They owed their own conversion to his preaching, and if Christ had not spoken *by him*, then He had never spoken *to them*. The beginning of the sentence, obscured to a careless reader, by some intervening words, which I omit, is in 2 Cor. xiii. 3, and the whole argument, for such it is, reads thus: "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me . . . examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, *prove your own selves*." And then, instead of taking for granted that they would seriously do that, he asks them, whether they needed to examine: "Know ye not, your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you—except ye be reprobates?" If they took that latter ground, the proof of Christ speaking in him was indeed gone.

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He appeals then, to the certainty of their knowledge about themselves to reprove their *uncertainty* about *himself*; and tells them, if they are going to set about proving in the one case, they had better set about proving in the other. And this is what people take up as an exhortation to all Christians seriously to examine themselves to see if their Christianity be not all a mistake!

But the question remains, If only they that believe are justified, and moreover there is a false and dead faith, as well as a real living one, how am I to know whether I have the right kind of faith except by self-examination?

Now the text at the head of this paper, if weighed in the soul, will give us, I surely believe, the means of answering this. Christ died for the ungodly. Yea, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This is most evidently how the apostle can say in the text that God "justifieth the ungodly," and also "to him that worketh not." If my condition is one of real impotence, of one without strength, then righteousness must be "to him that worketh not" in my case, or for me not at all. That is simple,—at least, if justification is the beginning of a Christian course. That it is so is just as simple, too, because it is "the ungodly" whom He justifies: the sinner and not the saint. I have not then to work myself out from sinnership into saintship before I am justified: as a sinner, I begin with that.

Faith, therefore, in One who justifies the ungodly, works necessarily this as a main thing, that I cease *from* working for justification. The two things necessarily go together here: "to him that worketh not, *but* believeth." He justifies *the* ungodly. I am that. I have not therefore to get to be something else, but simply to *own my condition in the presence of His grace*, and I am

righteous : this faith is counted unto me for righteousness.

There can thus be no doubt as to my having justifying faith. The faith that, seeing God stoop down to take up sinners, makes me give up self-righteousness, to take my place as a sinner before Him, is true and justifying.

But notice, then, this faith is occupied, *not* with itself, but with the grace of God in Christ. I have got, in a certain sense, a step lower even than "he that believeth on Him hath everlasting life." That is, it is not even the sense of *my believing*, that comforts and settles my soul, but the sense of love which has come down to me as a *sinner*. I see my *sin*, not my faith. My sin is easy to be seen, my faith much less easy. And, wonderful to say, it is my sin which gives me title to my Saviour. I give up all pretension to be anything ; I take my place before God, not as a worker, but as a sinner ; the grace which justifies the sinner is what enables me to take a place before Him just as that ; and doing so, I *am* justified ; and have the true and saving faith.

This settles also another question. People ask how you can say that you have the direct testimony of the Word of God for your salvation, so as to make it sin to doubt that. Plainly, it is sin to doubt God's word. But, they contend, while you have God's word that all believers will be saved, you have not that same word that *you* are a believer : that must be an argument at best, and you may be mistaken.

I admit at once that it is an argument that such and such an one is a believer. But it does *not* follow that the Word of God does not give me direct and positive testimony to what I am. For as we have seen, that testimony is, that Christ died for the ungodly, and that God justifies the ungodly. Dropping all effort, then,—



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all pretension to do anything, or to be anything but "ungodly," I see a Saviour for me, as that, whose love, whose power, whose all-sufficiency, it *would* be "sin to doubt." There is my assurance. I have title to *trust* Him, if not myself. Can I trust Him *too much*?

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## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND SALVATION.

The difference between these two it is important to state on many accounts. I shall endeavour in the first place to state it, if briefly, yet as distinctly as I am able, and then to show the importance of the distinction.

Eternal life is what begins in the soul when we are born of God. It is not a "change of heart," as people say, although the result of it is that. Nor is it a work in the old nature of man, but the communication of a positive new life, or new nature. Our Lord's words are well known: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." And so again the apostle (Rom. viii. 7): "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." After conversion, then, the flesh still remains unchanged; but side by side with it we have this new nature, given us of God, and therefore wholly according to His mind.

The opposition between these two is a matter of experience with every Christian, and the cause of deepest distress to him. He finds, when he looks within, a conflict of evil with good, where—until he knows the secret of power over it—the strength is in the evil and not in the good. "When I would do good, evil is present with me; for I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members

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warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am !”

Now, in this condition of misery, he who bewails it has clearly a “change of heart.” His delight is in the law of God ; the “law of his mind” is on God’s side. Power he has not ; he is brought into captivity to the law of sin ; a wretched condition indeed, and yet the beginning of infinite blessing for the soul.

It does not follow then that the one who is born of God has power to walk according to God. New birth does not necessarily bring with it that power ; as far as experience goes, often just the contrary. It is then that we become conscious of what sin is, and the misery of it, and its power too. And just because the bent of the mind is set right we become conscious of the tide of inward evil, against which, henceforth, we have to struggle.

It does not even follow that the man born again is conscious of the mighty change which has been wrought in him. Faith in Christ he must have, for we are only children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. But faith in Christ there may be without the consciousness of being a child of God. It is in nowise a right or proper condition to be in, but it is one that many, alas, are in nevertheless. Looking to Christ on the one hand, they hope in the mercy of God, while, looking at themselves on the other, they cannot understand how they can be what they are, yet be His children. In other words, they have believed *in Christ*, and so have eternal life, while they have *not* believed *the gospel*, and so have not salvation. For the *gospel*, says the Apostle, “is the power of God unto SALVATION to every one that believeth.”

Take as an example of the difference between having life and having salvation, Cornelius, the centurion, in

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Acts x. and xi. It is a case which has been often brought forward to the great injury of souls, as showing that God's favour is to be gained by working righteousness according to the light we have. This is grounded upon what the Apostle says about him: "I perceive that of a truth God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him" (x. 34, 35). This is true most surely, and was true of Cornelius, but it must not be understood as if a natural man had power to work righteousness, and be accepted on that ground. Cornelius was no longer a man dead in sins when the apostle met him. He was already a quickened soul, or he could not have wrought righteousness, nor his prayers and his alms have come up as a memorial before God. But he was a saint after the Old Testament fashion, knowing and adoring the true God, as worshipped in Israel, ignorant of Christ as actually come, and of the gospel as preached in Him. Hence, because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, he is to send for Peter to tell him words whereby he and all his house should be *saved* (xi. 14). Thus a man, not taken up as a sinner but as a *saint* (for as the Lord says, you must make the tree good in order to have the fruit good),—having eternal life necessarily, therefore, yet needed salvation. And if the gospel of Christ be the power for that, as the Apostle says, then all the Old Testament saints also must have been upon the same ground: pious men, born again and working righteousness and acceptable to God, and yet ignorant of that which the gospel of Christ, when really received, brings—"salvation."

Accordingly the apostle Peter, in his first epistle, (i. 10, 12), tells us, that the prophets themselves, prophesying of the grace that should come unto *us*, enquired and searched diligently concerning this very "sal-

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vation," and it was revealed to them—what? "That not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the *gospel* unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." What a difference there must have been between the condition of those who thus looked upon salvation from afar off, and that of those receiving it by the gospel ministered to them in the power of the Holy Ghost!

Yet these were prophets, converted men and children of God. They had life but they had not salvation. Let us look at some other passages which may help us to estimate the difference.

In Galatians, ch. iv., the case is again put of these who were really children of God under the Jewish dispensation: "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, *differeth nothing from a servant*, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. *Even so we*, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." There is the condition of believers under the law depicted. They were children in the condition of servants—*bond-servants*; not having yet their own proper place as children, which Christ's coming and death, redeeming them from under the law (see ch. iii. 13; 24, 25), alone gave them. Hence liberty was not enjoyed, nor could the real children of God call Him their Father as such. *Israel's* Father He was, but that was a totally different thing, as to which any one born a Jew could call Him so as well as they.

Thus they were children of God without the enjoyment of that relationship, as so many now. But with

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them it was a place which, of necessity, they had, and not through their own unbelief, as with those at this time in that condition. The difference for us is grounded upon this, that between those Jewish and these Christian times the Cross of Christ stands, of Him "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His (God's) righteousness for the passing over (*margin*) of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 25, 26). That is the aspect of that Cross, whether looking back over the past sins of believers, up to the very time when Jesus died, or as seen by us of this present time. In either case it is God's righteousness which is declared. As to "sins that are past," the sins of an Abraham or a David or a Rahab, where He had "forborne" and passed them over, now for the first time the full truth came out, as to how He could righteously do so. That cross was his justification, the declaration of His righteousness in doing so ; while for the present time it is His justification not in forbearing or passing over merely, but in pronouncing the perfect acquittal, the justification of the believer.

Now mark, this is the very ground, the very reason why the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," because "*therein is the righteousness of God revealed*" (Rom. i. 17). That righteousness, surely revealed on the cross, where the Son of God stooped to a cursed death in order to proclaim it—is revealed (wonderful to say !) in "gospel"—"good news" to sinners. God's righteousness, revealed in the Cross, is on our side and not against us. THAT is His power unto "salvation:" bringing in liberty unto the soul that grasps it, which the former ages could know nothing of. God for us ! His righteousness on

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our side! no longer simply His forbearance "passing over" sins, but positive acquittal, pronounced "justification" of the believer: this is the deliverance, the salvation, of him who believes it. It is the proclamation of a peace needed as much by the Jewish "nigh" ones, as by the "far-off" Gentiles (Eph. ii. 17). Unknown alike to each, when preached and believed it brings into peace and liberty before God: for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus it should be plain to us that salvation is another thing from life, and that souls having life might still not have salvation. The first is that by which we are children of God. As receiving it we are born again and have a new nature, become conscious of what sin is before God, and of its power, and have the bent of the mind changed, its "law" on the side of God and good. Yet with all this, though having faith in Christ, I may be ignorant of my being a child of God, and without power to do the good I would, or to overcome the evil I would not. "Salvation" is the power of God delivering me from this condition, bringing me into the blessed knowledge of peace with God, giving me rest in Christ, as one "accepted in the Beloved," where the love of God to me, known and enjoyed by my soul, is that which fills my heart with love to Him, and enables me for all His blessed will. Salvation is this actual deliverance from the burden of guilt and the power of sin.

We have taken up the condition of the saints under the old dispensation, because they present us clearly with the example of believers having life, and being children of God, who nevertheless did not and could not know salvation. We must remember, however, that the word "salvation" is one used with a great variety of application. Meaning "deliverance," it could be and is applied to any great deliverance, even from the power

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of earthly enemies. "Salvation is of the Lord," says Jonah in the fish's belly. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," Moses says at the Red Sea. As in the last case specially, these deliverances may be often types and figures of the great reality of God's salvation as revealed in the New Testament, but nothing more.

Besides this also, in the New Testament itself it is applied in two or three ways: to a final and ultimate deliverance of soul and body out of the whole scene of sin and evil when the Lord Jesus comes; to a "salvation" from dangers and temptations by the way (as in Phil. ii. "Work out your own salvation"); as well as to that first salvation of which we have been speaking, with which the Christian course (properly speaking), begins. Thus the apostle can say, God "HATH saved us;" while he can also tell us to "work out salvation;" and yet again, that "to them that look for Him (Christ), shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). The Christian salvation is then looked at in this extended way—first, from the guilt and power of sin; secondly from the perils of the way; thirdly, from the whole scene of sin and death together. It is with the first of these alone that we have to do in our present examination.

Now if we enquire a little as to the importance of distinguishing, as we have been doing, between life and salvation, it will help to confirm and illustrate the views already insisted on.

Where eternal life in the soul is confounded with salvation, the true place and meaning of repentance is sure to be overlooked. There is no repentance possible without faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." Hence if every believer is a saved person, repentance must follow salvation instead of preceding it. And indeed there is a sense in which that is true, if we take "repentance" as inferring that real right

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feeling with regard to sin, and forsaking it, which is indeed the "repentance" of one already a Christian man. Thus says the apostle to the Corinthians: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye *sorrowed to repentance*; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner. \* \* \* for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; \* \* \* for behold, what carefulness it wrought in you," &c. (2 Cor. vii., 9-11). It would be useless, as well as wrong, to ignore this meaning of repentance, produced by godly sorrow in the Christian, for sin into which he may have fallen, as plainly the Corinthians had. The confusion in people's minds, when looking at a passage like this, results from forgetting the very simple fact that these Corinthians were not sinners invited to believe the gospel, but Christians who had received it, but had got into a wrong condition. The mention of "salvation" here too, is a difficulty with those who look at salvation as only applying to deliverance from wrath to come. But the Scripture use of the word, as I have been saying, is not merely such as this. Deliverance from snares and perils of the way, from all things adverse to the soul, is "salvation" also. And thus the Corinthians, by true and godly sorrow and self judgment because of the sin they had fallen into, had been delivered from that which threatened to destroy all the power and blessedness of Christian life. But here it was no question of their receiving the "gospel of salvation." They had received it, and in that sense were already saved.

When those ignorant of the gospel seek to work up this "godly sorrow" in their souls, as what is to help them towards being justified and accepted before God, they mistake the whole matter. It is "the ungodly" whom God justifies (Rom. iv. 5); even as it is those *without strength* and ungodly, for whom Christ died



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(Rom. v. 6). We bring ungodliness and helplessness to Him, and not our "godly sorrow" therefore. The sincere soul who believes that he has to find godly sorrow in himself before he comes to Christ is wretched indeed. For who has such that he can be quite sure is fit for God, and such as His holy eye will detect no flaw in?

But then, there is the difficulty. For the Scripture order is, "*Repent* ye and believe the Gospel" (Mark i. 15); and again, "that *repentance* and remission of sins should be preached in his name" (Luke xxiv. 47). Are we entitled to reverse this order and say, "remission of sins and repentance," or "believe the gospel and repent?"

But how can a man repent while dead in sins; and if the gospel alone saves, and life and salvation are inseparable things, how can a man repent before he believes the gospel? Thus on the one side we must make repentance the work of an unconverted man, which is impossible; or else say, "believe the gospel and repent," which is not the scriptural order.

Is there no way out of this perplexity? Very simply, if we will take the simple statements of the word of God.

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." That is gospel, most truly such. It has its two parts, one may say: the declaration of the need to be met; the declaration of Christ's ability and desire to meet that need. Now in the reception of this gospel there are two things implied; the belief of the need itself, as well as faith in that Gracious One who has come down to meet it. Christ is preached then; the soul believes on Him; and "he that believeth on Him *hath* everlasting life." But to believe on Him, and to have everlasting life, are things distinct from *knowing that we have* life, and from "*believing the gospel*" in

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any proper way. The man is born again ; but new birth is the beginning of the knowledge of sin really. He finds himself "ungodly," tries to set himself right by God's help ; finds, after many trials, he is "without strength" too ; is brought to the discovery of what the condition of a "lost" one really is, and that he can do nothing to win salvation at Christ's hands. Thus he is brought to the place where, stripped of all pretension to be or to do anything, he finds Christ in all His fulness for him just as he is. He believes the *gospel* then, and enjoys peace with God. Before, he believed in the Saviour, and hoped for the salvation ; now he believes and *has* the salvation itself.

Now just that giving up of self-righteousness which *must* come before peace is known, is what the Scripture means by the repentance which precedes, in Divine order, belief of the gospel. Of this John the Baptist is a witness to us. His was the "baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins." And those who came to it were all "baptized by him in Jordan, *confessing their sins*." They brought no good works or good feelings, or promises of reformation. They brought their *sins*, and took their place in Jordan, the river of death, as those who were as good as dead men before God. And if John warned some who came to "bring forth fruit meet for repentance," it was that they should not "think to say within themselves, they had Abraham to their father,"—for a Jew the giving up of every title and claim upon God on the ground of righteousness.

Again in Job's case, (another Cornelius, if not more), repentance was for him a place of self-aborrence in dust and ashes (ch. xlii. 6). A man who abhors himself is not one trying to make something of his right feelings or of his convictions, as so many are ; but one who, as a sinner, simply takes his place as that, to be debtor to God's mercy for his all. Such "repentance" is still

"unto remission of sins," and that is God's order: "repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus."

Salvation follows: real and positive "deliverance" of the soul from its burden of fear and guilt, a salvation reaching on too to the breaking of the power of sin in the soul. It is when the prodigal has his Father upon his neck, and the best robe and shoes, and ring, all freely from that Father's love, that he is able to say: "I joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom I have now received the reconciliation." That "joy in God" is the source and spring of holiness, and of that "repentance" too, proper to the Christian; deeper than ever in self-abasement, and godly sorrow over sin.

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## THE KINGDOM OF THE ABSENT KING.

(MATTHEW XIII.)

### (2.) THE SEED-SOWING AND ITS RESULTS.

The Lord then has announced His death and resurrection. He was to be Jonah's antitype, "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." And thereupon follows the prediction of what would result to that wicked generation which had rejected Him, (xii. 41-45,) while the new relationships of the risen Son of man would be with the doers of His Father's will, and with these alone (46-50). This manifestly would exclude the nation of Israel in their unbelief, while it would bring in any and every believing Gentile. Judaism with its narrow restrictions was therefore gone.

Another significant action of the Lord introduces these parables of the 13th chapter. He leaves the house to sit by the seaside. Let any one compare the picture of the woman "that sitteth upon many waters," in Rev. xvii. 1, and he will find the meaning of this. The

angel interprets it for us in that chapter : "The waters where the whore sitteth are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" (15). So here the Lord is leaving the house, the place of recognized relationships, to take His place, as it were, in the highway of the commerce of the world, which the sea is. And there to the multitude upon the shore, He begins His parable with "Behold, a sower went forth to sow."

We are all familiar with this parable in a certain way. We all recognize in the Lord Himself this sower. He pictures Himself as One going forth with "the word of the kingdom," already declared in Israel by both the Baptist and Himself, and rejected by them, to get fruit for Himself with it in the field of the world at large. We are at once then face to face with that which has been going on during the whole time of the history of Christendom. The results, as the Lord gives them here, are before our eyes.

The seed is the "word of the *kingdom*," (ver. 19), the declaration of the authority and power of the One rejected and crucified as "King of the Jews." Raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, He sits upon the Father's throne, all authority in heaven and earth being given unto Him, who is exalted to be, at the same time, a Prince and Saviour. This is the seed He sows, for the sowing is always His, though He may use others as His instruments. The form the kingdom takes, therefore, is of one, not set up yet by Almighty power to which everything must needs yield and give way, but of one still offered for man's acceptance. Faith is still to prepare the way of the Lord, and, alas, "all men have *not* faith." Hence there is a manifest contrast at once between the present kingdom of Christ and the future millennial one. *Then* a "rod of iron" will break down all opposition. *Here* it is allowed to show itself, and is seen at once in its three forms of

devil, flesh and world. Three parts of the seed are thus rendered unfruitful. People receive the word, and thus become subjects of the kingdom, yet are self-deceived. Thus in some of its great features the world of profession all around us is portrayed.

The first class represented to us here is figured in the way-side hearer. In him the power of the devil is manifested. It is solemn to read even of such an one that the word was "sown in his *heart*" (ver. 19). That is not conversion. He does not even "understand," and his picture is of the "way-side:" hard-trodden ground which the seed does not penetrate, but upon which it lies exposed to the fowls of heaven, tempting, as it were, the tempter to "catch it away." Still was it "sown in the heart." For wherever the word of God speaks, it carries with it its own divine authority. The "inner man of the heart" is made aware of that which brings with it its own evidence and its own claim. "Light" is there, consciously to the soul that turns away from it even, but turns away because conscious it *is* light, and loving darkness rather, because its deeds are evil. These moments of conviction, who that has ever listened to the Word, can be a stranger to? Nor does it follow that that Word is "understood" in any proper sense. It is felt as light, detecting the thoughts and intents of the heart, and the one who feels and turns away from it because he feels it, falls under the devil's power. The impression made is soon removed. The seed sown is caught away. The poor dupe of Satan learns perhaps even to laugh at the momentary conviction, and to congratulate himself upon the wisdom of his present indifference.

In the next class of hearers, the stony ground illustrates the opposition of the flesh. It is here pictured not at its worst but at its best. This man "heareth the word, and anon (immediately) with joy receiveth it,

yet hath he not root in himself." Here it is not the natural man's rejection of the Word, but his reception of it; though there is no more real fruit than in the first case. The seed has rapid growth, the rocky soil forming a sort of natural hot-bed for it, so that it springs up quickly with abundant promise. But the very thing which favours this ready development, prevents its permanence. The seed cannot root itself in the rock, and the sun withers it up.

It is easy to see what is wanting here, and that the picture is of the stony heart of unbelief, unchanged, denying the word admittance, where seeming most to receive it. Many such cases there are where the gospel is apparently at once received, and with joy, but where that immediate joy is just the sign of surface-work and unreality at bottom. With such the ploughshare of conviction has never made way for the seed to penetrate. The work is mental and emotional, not in the conscience. There has been no repentance, no bringing down into the dust, in the consciousness of a lost, helpless, undone condition, which nothing but the blood and grace of Christ can meet. There has been no coming out of self,—self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, to Him. Thus there is no root in the man himself, Christ is not his real and grand necessity. So "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, bye-and-bye he is offended." This is the religion of the flesh, of sentiment, of unreality, and this is its end: it lacks the seal and sign of a work truly divine—permanence. It "*dureth for a while*:" "I know that what *God* doeth, it shall be *forever*" (Eccles. iii. 14).

It should admonish every workman who goes forth with this precious seed of the word of God—the lesson that our Lord teaches here, that there is such a hasty springing up of the word he carries, which is not to be caught at and rejoiced in, but the contrary. An easy

passage into joy and peace, without any deep conviction, any real taking the place of a lost sinner before God. It is not that experiences are to be preached, or trusted in by souls for peace. Christ alone is that, most surely. But we should nevertheless be admonished, that if Christ "came to seek and to save the *lost*,"—and that is "gospel,"—good news,—if any is,—men must know that they *are* lost, before they will really "understand," or savingly "receive" this gospel message. This is the Scripture truth and necessity of repentance; and this is its place: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel."

We come now to the third class of these hearers: "he that received seed among the thorns." The Lord Himself interprets what is figured here, as the opposition of the *world*: "the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." It is a more solemn warning, perhaps, than either of the others. For the word seems to get deeper hold here, and it is not the violent assault of persecution that overthrows this faith, but the quiet influence of things about us all in one form or another. No one but proves, perhaps, more or less, how occupation with needful and lawful things tends to become a "care" which saps the life of all that is of God within us. *Soul-care* is not despised, but just crowded out. We all feel the tendency; and who does not remember cases such as this, of those in whom apparently the seed of the word was springing up, and where by no sudden assault or pressure of temptation but just in the ordinary wear and tear of life, perhaps along with the unsuspected influence of prosperity so-called, like seed among thorns, the promise of fruit was choked?

But in all these three cases, we must mark that, however fair the appearance, there was never any "fruit." It was faith which, having not works, was dead, being

alone. It wrought nothing really for God in the souls of those who had it. It brought about no judgment of sin, no brokenness of heart, no turning to God : where these are there is fruit and real faith, and eternal life. Such shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of the hand of Him in whom they have believed.

Of the fourth class alone is it declared that such an one "heareth the word and *understandeth* it." This is the character of him who "received seed into the *good* ground;" and this man also "beareth fruit." This understanding of the word is thus the great point here. And what puts us into a condition to understand the gospel is just the understanding of ourselves. Our guilt, our impotence, our full need in all its reality apprehended by the soul, opens the way to apprehend the fitness and blessedness of the message of the gospel. If I am a sinner, and without power to get out of this place by any effort of my own, how sweet and simple that Jesus died for sinners, and that God through Him "justifieth the ungodly." If I *can* do nothing, how that word "to him that worketh *not*, but believeth," shines out to my soul! I understand that. It suits me; it is worthy of God. There is no "*good* ground" prepared to receive the truth of the gospel, save that which has been broken up by the ploughshare of conviction, and that not merely of sin, but of helplessness. "When we were yet without strength" came the "due time," when "Christ died for the ungodly."

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Sorrows and trials are not only like the sand and grit that polish a stone, but I shall be made to taste, through the trouble, what Christ is to me.



## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

### (2.) THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

The Gospel of John, like every book, perhaps, of Scripture, has its introductory portion, a remarkably long and beautiful one, occupying nearly the first two chapters. It consists of three parts: the first, doctrinal (i. 1-18); the second, the witness of John to Christ, (19-34); the third, the gathering of disciples round the Lord (35-51); to which, ch. ii. 1-22, furnishes a most important appendix. If we may call the whole gospel characteristically, "the glory of the Only-begotten," the first part gives us this glory manifested; the second, shews us the soul of man filled and lighted up with it; and the third, how that glory will fill heaven and earth in its due time, and be the attractive power, the centre and joy of all in all.

The first part gives us, doctrinally, the clue to the whole book:—the Word of God, eternal, eternally a person, and divine, "God," and "with God;" Creator of every creature; life in Him, and light for men, although the darkness comprehended not (1-5). Yet knowing what this human darkness was, God had given witness to this Light which shone for all, and met universal rejection, save where the omnipotence of God had wrought, outside of nature and of human will. To these, born of God, He, the rejected One, whom they received, gave title to become sons of God; and to these He manifested forth His glory, glory as of the Only-begotten with the Father, where Love and Light, the two elements of Divine glory, were displayed as "Grace and Truth" to the beholders of it (6-14). John bare witness to Him as one "after him" as man on earth, yet "before him" as One Divine. We Christians bear witness that we have received out of that Divine fulness, "grace upon grace"; for, in contrast with the law

given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, and the revelation of the hitherto unseen God, by One in the Father's bosom (15-18).

The features of the Gospel are plainly marked here. Christ, Life and Light ; man in the darkness of death, till quickened by Divine power, finding then in Him the manifestation of God, One *for* him, pouring out all His fulness to supply his need: manifested thus in grace, in the Son, as Father, to whom those quickened are given the place of sons, that they may be able to receive and enjoy this manifestation. All this in contrast with law, when God was hidden ; and the new grace, outside of Judaism, going out to men in general, without distinction of Jew or Gentile.

The second part (19-34) gives us to see in the testimony of the Baptist, how this need of man is met, and his heart filled, by this revelation. Grace and truth, come by Jesus Christ, are seen here in Him, who is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and at the same time, "Baptizer with the Holy Ghost." Expiation, cleansing, and spiritual power are main parts of this infinite blessing for the soul of man ; but Himself, "Son of God," fills the eye and satisfies the heart of him who came to bear witness of the Light.

Beautiful is his witness. Himself the centre of men's eyes, priests and Levites, sent on solemn embassy to enquire who he is, are fain to hear his testimony of Another, One among them whom they knew not. "Who art thou?" they ask. He, full of that Other, answers, "I am not the Christ." And "what then? art thou Elias?" And he says, "I am not." "Art thou that prophet?" And he answers "no." Then, when still further pressed as to who he is, he falls only lower in that Presence by them unseen : "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the

Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." They ask him of his baptism ; he tells them of the true Baptist, whose shoes he is not worthy to unloose.

Lower still at those blessed feet he falls ; for he had been partaker of the world's guilty ignorance of Christ ; Twice over he says, "I knew Him not," the world's own condemnation (verse 10), and then he tells how Divine power had opened his closed eyes, and his eyes opened on the Lamb of God. Blest joy of the sinner, to know and own the Saviour of even such !

The third part opens with verse 35. We have had the individual testimony of the heart to Christ. Now we have Himself the centre of gathering for heaven and earth. The heavenly gathering has its representatives in those gathered through this testimony of faith to the Lamb of God. They seek Himself, find out where he dwells, (not Capernaum, but a place bearing no name of earth) and abide with Him during the night, but where no night is. We ought to be able to understand this. The next day another is added to this circle, who gives it a very distinct character. He, naturally Simon son of Jona, transplanted out of the soil of nature and of Judaism, is given a new name, and made a living "stone" in a building of which he himself speaks to us ; "To whom coming, as unto a Living Stone, ye also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5). Mark too, "Messias" is interpreted for us to be "Christ," and "Cephas" is interpreted for us to be "a stone ;" for God is beginning to speak in the language of universal man, and Judaism is over. Again I say, all this ought to be simple for us to understand. It is a significant picture of the gathering to Christ, heavenly in character, now going on : formed by faith's testimony to Him, and leading into nearest intimacy with Himself in His own dwelling-place.

Another gathering begins in the 43rd verse ; and here there is a striking change. It is a new acting of the Lord Himself, and in *Galilee*, where the "great light" rises for Israel. The testimony is now distinctly Jewish, and the one who receives it owns the "Son of God" as "King of Israel." Yet at first he believes not: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" and when at last he does believe, the Lord tells him, "Hereafter (or henceforth) shall ye see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." This is the portion plainly of the Jewish people, when brought out of their unbelief in their last days. They shall see the Son of man attended by waiting angels, standing upon earth, but earth lit up with the glory of an "opened heavens." Nearer and more intimate joy is ours, in the many mansions of the Father's house, and *where He is.*"

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"OURS."

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O new-born joy ! O heavenly rest !  
 Close gathered to the Saviour's breast.  
 Ours His joy ; ours His throne :  
 Our only title, Christ alone !

O new heart, sing this strain of joy  
 The theme of grace, thy sweet employ.  
 The *Lord*, the Christ, once crucified,  
 Calls thus His saved ones to His side.

To be with Him amid that scene  
 Whose glories eye has never seen ;  
 To be with Him upon the throne;  
 Still more blest—His heart our own !

T. M.

## "THE SALVATION OF GOD."

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The "Salvation of God" stands in wondrous contrast with the Judgment of God. Yet that selfsame God, in whose province it will be, bye-and-bye, to execute judgment, is now known by the precious name of the "*Saviour* God." The work which now engages the heart and hand of God is that of Salvation. Once He was busied in the labour of creation, when "He spake and it stood fast;" but when that creation so fair and "very good" had become tarnished by the sin of man, and when man himself had, by sin, become fallen and hopelessly ruined, nothing remained for God but the exercise either of judgment in the vindication of His righteousness, or else the salvation, through sovereign grace, of those who had inherited His judgment. The "day of judgment" will come on bye-and-bye—when the wrath of a holy God will be displayed in all its power against sin, and shall "come upon the children of disobedience;" but in the meanwhile, ere that wrath be displayed, and ere those clouds of judgment break upon the impenitent souls of men, grace is having its own unhindered course, and the heart of God is indulging itself in the blessed work of salvation.

"*Now is the day of Salvation*" says the apostle in 2 Cor. vii.—and a long day it has been; but during its protracted hours no stroke of judgment has fallen—no peel of wrathful retribution has thundered and broken the stillness of its sacred suspense. One word has characterized its precious duration, one sound has been carried on the breeze, one note has rung from the lips of each servant of the Lord—Salvation—Salvation—Salvation! Oh! sweet word of hope, of life, of joy—bright anticipator of the dark drear scene beyond. Oh! word of balm, of rest, of peace, emanating from the heart of

God itself, and clothed in all the love of that heart—the Salvation of God! a Salvation planned by God and worthy of God.

What is this Salvation of God? It is a deliverance wrought by God Himself for the complete and everlasting emancipation from the power of sin and Satan of all those who, through grace, are called. It is the entire reversal, in a manner suitable to God Himself, of all the disastrous effects of Adam's transgression. It is the translation of people, who, both by nature and practice, were thoroughly ruined and fallen, from their lost condition into one of the favour and blessing of God; and, lastly, it is the establishment of the righteousness of God in view of the whole question of sin—in such a way, that, without the impeachment of His holiness, nay, but as the very expression of it, the sinner may be justified and fitted for "the inheritance of the saints in light."

This is the Salvation of God—and oh! how far do its limits extend beyond the meagre thoughts of reformation, amendment, improvement of oneself or of one's ways that suggest themselves to man. *Reformation can never save—albeit Salvation will certainly reform.* Reformation is the prescription of the philosopher; Salvation is the plan of God—the one deals with what is outward, but leaves untouched the inner springs of life and volition—the other begins with the source of failure, providing a new nature altogether and bestowing a power against the natural evil of the heart.

It is God's Salvation, purposed, planned and executed by God. The thought, the idea, the scheme and the structure were all of Him. Man was lost and could not work his way back. No law, no order of dealing, no plan of good works could atone for the infinitude of the guilt of sin. But grace provides a Saviour—and that

Saviour is "God manifest in flesh," and He by "the blood of the cross made peace." The Prince of life could not be held by death—He was raised from the dead—but in that wondrous death and resurrection of the Blessed One is found "The Salvation of God." And what part had man in that work? None whatever, save the sins that gave the occasion to it.

Mark the wondrous truth in Heb. i. 3—"Who, when He had BY HIMSELF purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High." Yea, by Himself—unaided by man, apart from the prayer, work, or repentance of man, did the Son of God make expiation on the cross, and then, the work being finished, He sat down—and the Salvation of God could sound forth with tidings of free pardon and eternal life for the sinner.

Notice, likewise, that this Salvation takes its character from the source whence it flows and not from the soul in which it is made good.

Thus Christ died for the sinner as such, and Salvation is for him too. Again, the work of Christ has a present value—and therefore, "*now* is the day of Salvation"—it may be had *now*.

Lastly, the value of the work of Christ is eternal, and so is the Salvation of the believer—free, present and eternal. With it there are no "ups and downs"—no "doubts and fears"—no "cloudy skies"—no "dark days"—all is settled, all is secure, all is imperishable.

" 'Tis everlasting peace,  
 Sure as Jehovah's name ;  
 'Tis stable as God's steadfast throne,  
 For evermore the same—"

And therefore let me say, dear reader, it becomes all who need and who seek this salvation to be done with those vain futile efforts of human legal righteousness which

can issue in sorrow and disappointment alone—and learn the infinite value of the truth of “the Salvation of God.”

J. W. S.

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## THE HOPE OF THE MORNING STAR.

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If we will carefully compare the prophetic outlook in the books of the Old Testament with that of the New, we shall be struck with the real contrast which is found under the apparent resemblance. Thus “Jerusalem” figures in the book of Revelation as distinctly as in Ezekiel, as the holy city of days yet to come. The details, too, resemble each other closely. How like the water of life issuing from the throne of God and the Lamb in the one, with the tree of life upon its banks, bearing the twelve manner of fruits and yielding its fruit every month, and its leaves being for the healing of the nations, to those which, in Ezekiel xlvii., issue from the sanctuary, and pouring forth into the salt sea, heal it, upon whose banks trees of unfading verdure bring forth in like manner new fruit according to the months, and the fruit thereof is for meat and the leaf for medicine. Any one may see that the one description is, as it were, borrowed from the other. Yet the one is a heavenly scene, the other an earthly. The one Jerusalem is the old city of wondrous memory, with its temple once again rebuilt, and its old ordinances even in some measure restored. The other is the “heavenly” Jerusalem, where no temple is, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. In the one case we are in view of earthly and Jewish, in the other of heavenly promises, and the two answer to each other, just as the things of earth are the shadow of heavenly realities.



Ezekiel's are Jewish promises; John's are Christian. Simple and obvious as the distinction seems, it would have been well if readers and teachers had kept it in mind, and not confounded things so different. Israel then would not have been robbed of her own portion, and the hopes of the Church of God not degraded to Jewish ones.

Let us turn, then, with this distinction in mind, to the close of the Old Testament, to compare it a moment with the close of the New.

The day of the Lord is before Malachi. Man's day is over. He has done what he would for some six thousand years, at least, of restlessness and strife and wrong. Judgment for it all surely comes at last, but the judgment of living men upon the earth, and not what John sees—the judgment of the dead before the “great white throne,” when the heaven and the earth flee away before the face of Him that sits on it.

But what says Malachi? “Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” No question of eternal punishment is that, reader, but of the earth's purification from the evil-doing which so long has defiled it. “But unto you that fear My name shall the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.”

There is again the Jewish promise: earth cleared of its oppressors, and the shining forth of the Sun of righteousness. It is Christ's coming as we surely know; Christ's presence (the Light of the world) bathing the world with light. How blessed that universal day will be! How one pities the soul that does not bound

with joy to think of it! "The whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

That is the sun-rising, then, and the day, and fitly and beautifully the Old Testament closes with the assurance of coming blessing and deliverance for that earth so long in the bondage of corruption. But now let us look at the close of the New Testament, and listen to some of its final words. The prophecy of the Apocalypse is over. The visions have passed away from the eye of the seer. There is one word of confirmation given: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." And what now? "*I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and MORNING STAR.*"

Who can doubt the connection,--who can fail to see the reference to Malachi? Yet who but must note the distinct and designed contrast also? While in each case the Person of the Lord Jesus is before the soul, in the one it is the *Morning Sun* that gleams on the horizon, in the other, the *Morning Star*, the herald, but not the bringer of the Day.

Do you think on that account the older revelation is the fuller and the grander? Do you say that surely the full flood-tide of day for the world must be better than the shadows of night upon it, even though the herald of the day glitters in the darkness of the sky? All depends upon the point of view. For the world confessedly it is so, and the promise for the world is clearly in Malachi. But it does not follow that for the Christian the better thing is not in the revelation to the beloved disciple. And we shall find it to be so, if we look but a little closer.

"And I will give him the Morning Star" was the promise before this to the over-comers in Thyatira (Rev.

ii. 28). Associated with it is the promise of rule,—the sharing of Christ's rule over the earth. "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father" (ver. 26, 27). Thus in that coming day spoken of by Malachi in the passage quoted, the Christian's place will be that of joint-heirship with Him who has title over all. His place in the day-time for the earth is not forgotten. He is a child of the day now, and he will be then manifested as such. Indeed, as the apostle tells us (Rom. viii. 19-21), "the whole creation," groaning in the bondage of corruption, waits with earnest expectation for the "manifestation of the sons of God" (the day of the "redemption of the body") as the period of its own deliverance. Not having partaken of the liberty of *grace*, which they now know, it will be yet brought into the liberty of the *glory*\* which awaits them.

But while the saints of the present and the past will thus have place in the "day" of the earth's coming glory, and will be sharers of the rule of their glorified Lord then, there is another and a dearer promise in what is added to this in the address to the overcomers in Thyatira. "And I will give him the Morning Star," is plainly something *additional*; and Jesus' gift of Himself to His people is as plainly something more precious far than any gift of authority or rule, even along with Him, could be.

But why this particular form of the promise, "I will give him the *Morning Star*?" Plainly the word speaks

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\* "Glorious liberty" of ver. 21, should be "the liberty of the glory."

of the Lord Jesus by a title which is only His until a certain time. The Morning Star speaks of the coming day; and it *gives place* to it. When the day is fully come the Morning Star is gone. Has this, and can this have, any application to this promise? There can be no proper doubt that it has, and that it is intended to convey to us the blessed and comforting assurance, that *before* day comes for the world,—*before* Jesus shall arise for it as the “Sun of Righteousness,”—we shall see Him, be with Him, and find our portion in Him.

And thus it becomes clear why such emphasis is put upon this promise, and why it occupies in the *Christian* revelation the very same place that that in Malachi occupies in the Jewish. In the latter case it was the last closing word of utterances which had gone on almost continuously for over thirteen hundred years: the last word left to linger in the ears and fill the heart of the believer of those days. In presence of the evil and confusion everywhere, he was called to look for the coming of One whose was the rightful throne of the whole earth, and who would put forth His claim, and still its confusions into peace, and banish the sin and evil from it. For us, while we do not forget or cease to look for this,—a better and a sweeter hope is left us. The King will come: yes, assuredly, and we shall be in His train in that day of His triumph, and He will give us to sit with Him on His throne, as He has promised. But before and beyond all this, is our own proper and peculiar joy. Then, while the shadows of the night rest still upon the earth, before the morning dawns and the Sun of the endless day kisses the hill-tops in token of its approach, the Morning Star will be ours; we in our own place and privilege in the Father's house of many mansions shall be with Himself, and

——“hear His voice, and see His face,  
And know the fulness of His grace.”

This is our hope,—a hope independent of earth and its blessing. For that He will come again, most surely: but “when Christ, who is our life, shall *appear*, then shall we also appear with Him in glory” (Col. iii. 4). When He comes forth to execute judgment, He will “come *with* ten thousand of His saints” (Jude 14.) The white horsed Rider, “King of kings and Lord of lords,” coming to break with “a rod of iron” the pride and strength of the rebellious nations of the earth, will be followed by the array of heaven’s armies, whose “fine linen, white and clean,”—for “the fine linen is the righteousness of saints,”—makes manifest who they are (see Rev. xix). Not to judge *them* will He then come. They will be with the Judge in that judgment, and will judge with Him; for “the saints shall judge the world” (1 Cor. vi. 2).

Before that day of His appearing, then, the saints must be with their Lord. They must be with Him before He appears, if they are to “appear with Him.” And if we look at that scene in Revelation (ch. xix), just now referred to, we may see if we will, how these white-robed saints have been employed before ever “the heavens opened.” We may look on, and see them in another character, not as warriors, but gathered in one company, assembled at a bridal-supper, “the marriage-supper of the Lamb,” and the company itself one that bears that significant title of union and of intimacy, “the wife” of the Lamb.

Yes, “the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” And there they are with festal gladness in all the fulness of the joy of that heavenly place, before ever the judgment or the blessing of the earth has come.

This is the hope of the “Morning Star.” The herald of the coming day for earth itself it is, when the Lord

assumes that character. The day of "His patience" is over. He has "asked," and gotten "the heathen for His inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession." He is to rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. But the first point of preparation for this is to gather the company of His co-heirs together, the sharers of the day of his prosperity and power, as before of the day of His rejection and suffering. If they have suffered, they must also reign with Him. And the first thought of His heart, when that long expected time arrives, is to have His people with Himself,—to take them up out of the world before the brooding thunder-clouds of judgment break.

How many precious assurances cluster around this hope of the Morning Star! But I want to point out briefly, how simply Scripture distinguishes between the two parts or stages of Christ's coming. He comes to take up His people out of the world unto Himself. He comes afterwards *with* them to judge yet to bless the earth. These two things are never confounded in the Word of God.

In the comfort the apostle is giving to the Thessalonian saints concerning their departed brethren, he gives the two things together, much as we have seen them now. They had thought, plainly, that while the living saints at His appearing would reign with Him in His kingdom and glory, the departed ones had missed their share in this. He answers them on the contrary that in that day, "those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thes. iv. 14). How then would that be? he anticipates as the enquiry, and answers it with the statement that they were to be raised again in order to be brought with Jesus. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and re-

main unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep; for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to *meet the Lord in the air*, and so we shall ever be with the Lord."

Our meeting-place is not on earth, then. It is "in the air." Thither the Lord has descended, but as yet unrevealed to the nations of the earth, when the dead and living saints are raised or changed, and caught up to be with Him. It would not appear from these passages, however, that any great lapse of time necessarily intervened between this taking up of the saints to the Lord, and His coming with them to the judgment. It would not even suggest itself perhaps to us that there was any. Still when we look a little closer, there are difficulties in the way of believing that all does take place, as it were, at once.

In the first place, who are the "sheep" of Matt. xxv., in this case? The common application of this passage is indeed to the day of *final* judgment before the "great white throne;" but this is every way wrong. For the prophecy of ch. xxiv. and xxv. is one complete whole, and the Lord's coming spoken of is manifestly what we have spoken of as His "appearing." It is at the close of Jerusalem's great trouble (ch. xxiv. 16, 21, 29) and for their deliverance (13), just as in Zechariah (xiv.); and the Lord then sets up His throne on earth, and gathers, not the dead of all times, but the living nations of those times, before Himself. There is no hint of resurrection, or of the fleeing away of the heavens and the earth. They are judged not according to their whole "works," as in Rev. xx., but upon the ground

simply of receiving or neglecting certain people whom in a special way He calls His "brethren." In a word, all is most distinctly different from the final day of account. This last is *after* the millennium, that in Matthew *before* it, and as I have before said, is parallel to Zech. xiv., where also the Lord comes to end Jerusalem's distress, to be King over all the earth, and Judge of the nations.

But then, just here is the difficulty. If the Lord comes, gathers all His saints to meet Him in the air, and immediately comes on with them to the judgment of the earth, how is it that there are "sheep" to be found there when He comes? Nor can it be said, that these are suddenly converted at that time, for it is quite evident that they have had, by the King's own account of them, sufficient time to prove their faith by their works, in clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and visiting the sick and prisoners. Thus it seems that an interval there must have been between the Lord's taking up his people and His coming to judgment with them, to allow for the conversion of these souls spared and blessed at His judgment seat on earth.

And so indeed it is. There is an interval, and one filled with events of intensest interest and deepest importance. It is the time when He who will have then accomplished the work of educating, and taking to Himself out of the earth, a *heavenly* people, will take in hand to raise up for Himself on earth, an *earthly* people. And it is a principle of His dealing with fallen men—a solemn but necessary one,—that in order to blessing there must be judgment. We are told expressly: "When Thy judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Judgment then is coming; and He allows the evil that is to be judged, to come out openly. The masses of Christendom,—the



true saints throughout it having been taken out,—then become speedily and openly infidel to the truth. The “form” of godliness is put off, as well as the “power” denied. Corruption becomes apostacy. A real and personal antichrist, energized by Satan into a power of evil, of which men have little conception now, yet for which things are even now preparing, will head up the old confederacy, never yet extinct, “against the Lord and against His Christ.” The Jews will recognize as their Messiah one who, coming in his own name, will do over again in their sight miracles such as Elias did. And the old strife between the serpent’s and the woman’s seed will ripen into its last decisive form of *Deified MAN* against *Incaruate GOD*.

Scenes such as this the earth will yet surely see. And yet He, whose hand is, spite of all, the hand that holds and governs everything, will make all this a school for the education of a people for Himself. Even then there will be a remnant according to the election of grace: a Jewish remnant, as in Matthew xxiv.; a Gentile remnant, as in Matthew xxv. Persecution shall be theirs, the earthly heritage, as of old, of the Lord’s people. Tribulation, such as if it were not shortened, “no flesh should be saved.” Gifted of God, they endure to the end, and they *are* saved. Zechariah and Matthew have witnessed how.

This is all unproved at present; and I cannot enter here upon the proofs. The mention of such things even at least would urge to search out of that book of the Lord, which, thank God, lies open before us all. I have spoken of these things with this object. Reader, I am no prophet and no prophet’s son,—but the deepest, darkest night-time for the world lies yet before us, not behind. Again, thank God! over this deepest darkness—brighter, if possible, for such a scene—there shines

the brightness of the Morning Star! Oh, what a relief! We wait—not for the night to grow darker; not for signs and seasons, or times and days to be fulfilled; we “*wait* for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.”

“I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and Morning Star.” Amid a scene such as lies around us, the closing words of the Book of God direct our outlook to this blessed object. Left to linger in our ears and upon our hearts, they bid us be occupied, not with the evil but with the good; not with earth but heaven; to be with lamps burning and loins girded, as men that wait for their Lord. Reader, He is coming! “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come!” Hark, once again, “He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

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## THE KINGDOM OF THE ABSENT KING.

(MATTHEW XIII.)

### (3.) TARES AMONG THE WHEAT.

Thus it is plain that the kingdom in its present form, is *not* to be a universal one. From that which the prophets of the Old Testament picture, it is widely distinguished. Left to man's reception of it, and not set up by the right hand of power, it is received by some, rejected by many, and even where outwardly received, in many cases no real fruit Godward is the result. There are thus “children of the kingdom” who in the end, like those among Israel, are cast out of it; and that where there is no fault with the seed or with the sowing of it, but the fault is entirely in the nature of the soil in which the seed is sown.

But that is not the whole picture by any means. We are now to see not merely the ill-success of the good seed, but the result of the introduction of seed of another character, and sown by another hand,—the positive sowing of the enemy himself, and not simply his opposition to that which is sown by another. “The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way” (24, 25). Thus in the very midst of that which the first parable has shown us springing up,—good wheat, although there may be many barren and blighted ears,—the enemy sows, *not wheat at all*, but *tares*. In this case it is not the Word of Christ that is sown, clearly, but Satan’s corruption of it. The springing up of the good seed could not produce tares, nor the father of lies preach truth. Hence the test of a man’s speaking by a good or evil spirit could be: “Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh,\* is not of God; and this is that spirit of Antichrist,” &c. (1 John iv. 2, 3). The enemy of Christ, (“*his enemy*,” ver. 25), even “as an angel of light,” will not *hold up* Christ, for he knows too well what Christ is for souls. On the other hand, when Christ *was* preached, even of envy and strife, the apostle could rejoice for the same reason (Phil. i.) But here, not the “corn of wheat” (Jno. xii. 24) which would bring forth wheat if it sprang up at all, but “tares” are sown; and “tares” and nothing else spring up. The word sown in imitation yet in real opposition to the truth, produces under a Christian name and dress a host

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\* This is more literal as a translation, than “*that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,*” of the common version.

of real enemies to the truth and to Christ, "children of the wicked one" (38), not mere children of nature however fallen, but the devil's own: begotten by *his* word, as God's children by His.

And here, alas, we read of no hindrances, no opposition of hard-trodden ground, or underlying rock, no catching away by birds of the air, no choking by thorns. All circumstances favour this seed and its growth. It needs no nursing; will thrive amid "cares of this world," and grow up in companionship with the "deceitfulness of riches." It is at home everywhere, and the soil everywhere congenial, for its "wisdom" is not "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God:" it "descendeth not from above, but is *earthly, sensual, devilish*" (Jas. iii. 15).

So it prospers. And even the children of God, nay, "the *servants*" (27), are slow to discern the true nature of what is being sown, and growing up amongst them. Sad and solemn it is to see how lightly we think of error; for it is but another way of saying, how lightly we value truth. Yet by the word of truth are we begotten, and by the truth are we sanctified (Jas. i. 18; Jno. xvii. 17). It is this by which we alone know either ourselves or God. It is of the perversion of this that the apostle said, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8); words which he emphatically repeats, that we may be assured it was no hastiness of ill-tempered zeal that moved him, but the true inspiration of the Spirit of Christ.

The seed springs up, then, and there are now tares among the wheat. How soon that began in the professing Church! Judaism, legalism, ceremonialism, and even the denial of the resurrection itself, the key-

stone of Christian doctrine, you may find again and again among the churches of the apostolic days; and in the sure word of God what solemn warnings as to the future,—a future long since present. “Even now are there many Antichrists,” wrote the last of the apostles: “whereby we know it is the last time.”

But for the sowing of these tares, those are responsible to whom the field has been entrusted. “*While men slept*, his enemy came, and sowed tares among the wheat.” There was the failure. In the case given in the first parable, they had not power to prevent the ill-success of the Word of truth in men’s hearts, or the hollowness of an external profession of the truth, which yet had no proper root in the man who made it. All who “gladly received the Word upon the day of Pentecost,” were baptized “the same day.” There was no waiting to see, if, when tribulation came, they would endure, and yet that was the real test for the stony ground hearer. Such would “immediately with joy” receive the Word, and so baptism, and be added to the disciples. It was not failure on the part of the baptizers, if such there were, for the heart they could not read. There each man stood on his own responsibility to God.

But it was a different thing, when that which was *not* the Word, but Satan’s corruption of it, began to be sown, and that in the very midst of disciples. And, once again I say, how soon that took place; and how soon it became needful to write even to the little babes about Antichrist; and to exhort men “earnestly to contend for the faith *once* delivered to the saints;” and that, because of “certain men, *crept in unawares*,—ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3, 4). Thus were the tares already manifested. “The children of the wicked one”

were there. Christ was denied in His own kingdom. The question of His actual sovereignty was raised, and He must come in sovereignty and in judgment, to decide that question. The servants are not competent to decide it. "The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up," these tares? "But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them."

A solemn lesson, from which we may, if we will, learn much; while it does *not* teach what so many seem disposed to learn from it. For plainly, communion at the Lord's table is not at all the question here, and it is nothing less than wilful blindness to persist in this application of it in the face of the manifold Scriptures which contradict it. What meaning could, "Put out from among yourselves that wicked person," addressed to the church at Corinth, have for those who here learn from the lips of the Lord Himself, as they say, that tares and wheat are to grow up together in the church, and that it is vain and wrong to attempt any such separation? And what mean even their own feeble efforts to put out some notorious offenders, if this be so? If this be to gather up tares, why attempt it in the case of even the worst, when the principle they maintain is not to do it at all?

On the other hand, this passage does teach us, that it is one thing to know and own the evil that has come in, and quite another to have power or authority to set things right again. Men slept, and the tares were sown. No after vigilance or earnestness could repair the mischief. The gathering up must be left for angels' hands in the day of harvest. "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say unto the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Jude's remedy for the state of things is just the same. Of the ungodly men of whom he speaks as having crept in among the disciples, he says: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, *prophesied of these*, saying, Behold, the LORD COMETH with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Thus alone in the wheat-field of Christendom is the separation of the evil from the good effected. It is quite another thing to purge *ourselves*, according to the apostle's word to Timothy (2 Tim. ii.), from the vessels to dishonour in the house; and this we are bound to do. The purging of the house itself, the Lord alone will or can do.

Meanwhile tares and wheat *do* grow up together. The dishonour done to Christ in Christendom no means of ours can ever efface or rectify. No, not even the most zealous preaching of the Gospel, however blessed the result of that, will ever turn the tares of Unitarianism, Universalism, Annihilationism, Popery, and what not, into good wheat for God's granary. Nor can we escape their being numbered with us as Christians in the common profession of the day. If we met them at the Lord's table, as if it were no matter, or we could not help it, we should proclaim ourselves "one bread, one body" with them (1 Cor. x. 17); for "we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are *all partakers of that one bread*." But while refusing to link ourselves with them to the dishonour of our Lord and Master, we cannot put ourselves outside the common profession of Christianity, to avoid companionship with them *there*. Nor if we had power, have we skill to separate infallibly the Lord's people, many of them

mixed up with most of the various forms of error. "The Lord knoweth them that are His," is alone our comfort. He will make no mistake. And "Behold, the Lord cometh," is the only available remedy which faith looks for, for the state of things at large.

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## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (*Continued.*)

Chap. 2, save the last three verses, gives us the appendix that I spoke of, to this introductory portion. Following the picture of the Jewish gathering of the last days, which closed the last chapter, it gives us a further prophetic picture, first, of the Lord's union with and blessing for His earthly people in millennial days (ii. 1-11); and, secondly, of the purging of the Father's house in Israel (12-22). Both things are to be fulfilled by him as the Risen One. In the first case the "third day" speaks of it (ver. 1). In the second, He proclaims His resurrection as that which should manifest His title to cleanse the Temple.

The place of each occurrence is however different. The blessing is in Galilee, according to what we have before noted. The judgment is at Jerusalem, where the temple was. We shall find this characteristic of the book.

Israel's union with Jehovah is often figured in the prophets as a marriage (Hos. ii. 16, 19, &c.) Here He takes, as it were, the place of the bridegroom, providing the wine of the feast. But first their own wine is allowed to run out, that they may be brought into complete dependence upon Himself. Nor can He furnish it until His hour comes, spite of the importunity of his



mother, the type of Israel as the nation of whom, according to the flesh, He came. When that hour comes He first bids fill the waterpots with water. Till now they were empty, though set there for purifying : a striking image of the unreal, ceremonial purification, hollow and heartless, of the nation when He came among them. But at His word, they fill the waterpots to the brim, and the water of purification is changed into the wine of joy—the best wine they ever drank, kept to the last.

A significant hint of our own higher blessing is found amid all this : “Both Jesus was called, and *His disciples* to the marriage.” They were called because He was ; and they come with Him. And so it shall be in the day of the fulfilment of what is here.

In the second part of this chapter, we find “the Jews’ passover at hand,” the feast in memorial of their great deliverance (13). But how could they keep it, with the Father’s house profaned by the sin of worldly traffic into a den of thieves ? Therefore judgment must precede ; and He who, as having passed through death and come up out of it, has title to bless, has authority no less to judge, that the presence of evil may not interfere with the free flow of blessing.

The main body of the gospel begins with the 23rd verse of the 2nd chapter. And here we have a successive presentation of the things pertaining to that “life eternal,” which he who believes in Jesus has. It may be well to run the eye over the headings of the separate sections of this part, from ch. ii. 23 to xvii. inclusive, that we may apprehend a little at the outset the reality of this, and the order and connection of the truths before us.

First, then, we have the two things which characterize the believer now :—

(1.) The possession of eternal life, as born of God (ch. ii. 23).

(2.) The gift of the Holy Ghost, the "living water" (ch. iv.)

This is the first subsection; itself introductory to all that follows. We have next,—

(3.) Eternal life, as a quickening *out* of a scene of judgment, and bringing from under law (ch. v.)

(4.) The character of it down here, as a life of *faith* (ch. vi.)

(5.) The believer, having the Holy Ghost, as the channel of blessing in the world, which as a whole has rejected Jesus and is yet unblessed.

It will be seen how chapters 3 and 4 correspond to ch. 6 and 7 here: the first two giving the *individual* aspect of the truths which in the latter are given in relation to the whole scene. The next three chapters are a parenthesis, in which "light," rather than "life," becomes the subject. They divide into two parts:—

(6.) The *soul* "in the *light*," and uncondemned; at liberty by the truth (ch. viii.)

(7.) The *light* in the *soul*, and the Person of Christ filling it: the Shepherd with the sheep (ch. ix, x.)

After this, in perfect order, we return to the subject of life, to find now—

(8.) Life in *resurrection*, triumphant over death (ch. xi.); and as the fruit of that "corn of wheat," which that it might not abide alone, fell into the ground and died (ch. xii.).

Finally, in the chapters following, we have (to speak very generally)—

(9.) Cleansing for communion (ch. xiii.).

(10.) Access by the Spirit to the Father (xiv.).

(11.) Fruitfulness (xv.) and

(12.) Testimony in the world (xvi.) Closing with the intercession of Him, in spirit already the Risen and Ascended One; the expression of that mind and heart for

the glory of the Father and the blessing of His own, which secures the accomplishment of every detail of the Eternal plan and counsel.

To return; we begin, in ch. iii., with the beginning of eternal life in the soul,—new birth. The last three verses of ch. ii., which belong rightly to the present one, give us as simple history man's need of it. His faith in Christ even, as One who had proved His mission by His miracles, was (however correct) of no more value than anything else that naturally came of him. He could reason correctly, and be convinced and orthodox, without the least need of or care for the One he believed in. Nicodemus *has* this need; but taking the same ground as the rest, of being convinced by miracles, the Lord tells him such conviction was not enough, man must be born again, have a new nature from God; not a change of the old, for that was not possible: that which was born of the flesh was only flesh. To the question, *how* man is born again, the Lord answers, "of water and the Spirit," not two separate births, but one; not of baptism, for neither is the action of the Spirit tied to that, nor are the fruits of new birth manifested in the baptised as such, nor is baptism an essential to entering the Kingdom of God; nor again could Nicodemus, as a Jew, be expected to understand the meaning of a Christian rite, not yet instituted. The reference is to Ezekiel xxxvi., and Nicodemus ought to have known that God was to "sprinkle clean *water*" upon Israel, and give them a new heart and spirit, and put His "Spirit" within them, in order to their final blessing in the Kingdom of God. Even so must Jews, and not Gentiles merely, be born again. And these were "earthly things" (verse 12), not in nature, but as taking place on earth, within the sphere of man's cognizance. He, the Son of man, and yet One who dwelt in heaven (13), had

heavenly things to speak of, which no man among them had been up in heaven to bear witness of, except Himself. How could they, so slow to receive the earthly things, believe the heavenly?

For those, thus bitten of the serpent, sin, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, the Son of man must be lifted up; yea, in God's love to the world He had given His Son, that this eternal life might be the portion of believers wherever found. All else were under condemnation; because that which witnessed to itself and man's condition—"light"—had come into the world; and those who rejected it did so only because they loved the evil which it exposed.

Then the Lord solemnly sets to His seal, along with John His fore-runner, to man's condition as dead and needing life. We bury the dead; and baptism is burial (Rom. vi. 4). In the land of Judea, chief place of privilege in privileged Israel, Jesus with His disciples, "tarried and baptized" (ver. 22).

John too is baptizing in Ænon, and a question rises there, significantly enough, "about purifying." Purifying dead man! You must give him life, for that. So John bears witness to the heavenly Lifegiver: coming from above, and above all; bearing witness below of heavenly things which He has seen; speaking in Divine words, so that he who hears (though man in general hears not) sets to his seal that God is true; finally, the Son of the Father, with all the things of the Father in His hand: "he that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (ver. 36).

The voice crying in the wilderness has lingered on to tell us this. Here it ends, not mournfully but joyfully, an earthly voice that cannot speak of heavenly things, but commends us to Him who can. Henceforth we

listen to Himself alone; and in the very next chapter, these heavenly things begin to open on us.

But for this we again leave Judea for Samaria. The suited place for grace to show itself in, is among outcasts; and here with one, an outcast among outcasts, the Lord can refresh Himself in His own weariness by telling out His tale of grace to her.

The manner of it is so instructive and so beautiful. She, a sinner and a gross one, and He, knowing it all full well, His first business is not with her sins, but with herself. A weary, restless heart He wins by the exhibition of God as a giver, and of "living water,"—full and perfect satisfaction even for her, if only she would, and Himself there, upon God's part, ready to make it good to her. When she lays hold of this, however dimly understanding what it means, then, and not till then, He in a few simple words tells her all about herself. Yet He gives no judgment of it, but puts it before her eyes in the light of that goodness of God which He has made known to her. She owns him as a prophet, and wants to learn how God is to be approached. She has found no good at Gerizim, though it was there her fathers worshipped; would she find it at Jerusalem? Then He tells her of salvation, and how God has revealed Himself in that, as a *Father* seeking worshippers, who could worship in reality, in the sweet and precious sense of what He was. "Ah," she says, "Messias cometh; He will make all this plain;" and He tells her, He is that Messias, come to make it plain indeed to her.

In that moment it is all revealed. He who had been with her by the well, who had shown His perfect knowledge of all that conscience upbraided her with, yet had not upbraided her, but assured her of Divine goodness there for her, did she only want it; relieving for ever

the thirst of the soul by the knowledge of salvation and of Him the Saviour,—pledge and revealer of the Father and His love—yes, *He* was the Messiah. Away she runs with her new-found joy, to make it known. And soon there are fields in Samaria “white unto the harvest,” ready for the reaper’s hand.

But let us see what we have got here doctrinally. It is plainly a step beyond the last chapter. There we had “life,”—new birth. Here we have “salvation,” the gift of the Holy Ghost, “the living water,” (comp. ch. vii. 39), salvation for the soul in Christ, and worship as the fruit of the soul’s gladness; Judaism gone (ver. 21), the Father manifested, and Christ the “Saviour of the world.” These are truths characteristic of christianity, and they furnish forth a scene in which the heart of Him who toiled to produce it, finds recompense and refreshment (32).

Two days He spends in Samaria, typically pointing, I doubt not, to the present time of gospel-testimony, and then He is again in Galilee, in Cana, where we are reminded, He had made the water wine. That is, He is again in Jewish connection. Even the blessed scenes in Samaria have not made Him forget His people of old. And in Galilee, the place of grace towards them, He heals the nobleman’s son.

It is a picture of what will happen in the latter days. The “nobleman” is the nation, which has played courtier to the world, but whose hope and strength being smitten for the rejection of Christ—“at Capernaum” (see Matth. xi. 23),—they will turn at length to the Lord, that He who has smitten may bind them up. And the faith that has grown from their necessity (ver. 50) will be henceforth confirmed by their prosperity (53).

This, as an appendix to the Gentile scene in Samaria, is the witness to us that those who are during the pre-

sent time as concerning the gospel, enemies for the Gentiles' sake, are still beloved, and yet to be shewn mercy, for the fathers' sake, because the gift and calling of God are without repentance.

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## ANSWERS TO SPECIAL QUESTIONS.

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(5) Who compose "the kingdom of God's dear Son?" (Col. i. 13.) I read, we are "translated into it." I cannot see how it can be the church; and if it be Christendom, I should be a member of it before conversion. .

*Ans.* "The kingdom of God's Son" is most certainly one which includes all professors of Christianity, whether real or nominal. But it is looked at here as the place of light and privilege in contrast with "the power (or authority) of darkness" (same verse). This the place where Christ is owned is, although men are not actually "in the light" (1 Jno. i. 7, ii. 9) until converted. It is no question of the Church, nor of being a member of anything. God has brought you out of the outside darkness of heathenism into the sphere where His own Son reigns and is acknowledged. It is an immense privilege, surely, whether you be converted or not; but of no more avail than any other of the good gifts which men abuse, if, after all, Christ be rejected.

(6) In what manner do we find in the Word, that God chastens the believer? Is being left to himself as out of communion the only way? Can we say that when God deals in judgment with him, allowing him to reap the fruit of his failure, He is chastening him?

*Ans.* In 1 Cor. xi. 30-32, sickness and death are called both judgment and chastening. Nor is a soul out of communion "left to himself" until after chastening

has proved ineffectual to restore him. It is the last and most terrible sentence of all. "*Ephraim is joined to his idols*"—cannot be sundered from them,—"*let him alone.*" How long is it before a Father's lips can say, "Let him alone?" But even then, when left to find out what his own way is, the chastening he will still get, though now it may be at the hands of the world, or of the devil, because he would not take it directly from the Lord's. And there is no "judgment" for the believer which is *not* chastening, and because He who chastens, *loves*.

(7) What is the meaning of 1 Pet. iv. 17?

*Ans.* It is always a principle, that the judgment of God begins at his own house. It was so with Israel. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; *therefore* I will punish you for your iniquities." It is so for Christians, as in these words of Peter. The whole time of our sojourn here, that word is made good. "*Our God is a consuming fire.*" But it is the consumption of the dross, that is in His mind,—the purifying of His gold. Thus the righteous are "*with difficulty*—(not 'scarcely') saved" (ver. 18). God has to take infinite pains with us. He has to show his judgment of sin wherever he finds it, and to approve His holiness both as governor of the world, and Father of His own family. He has to make *us* partake of His holiness. Hence His "judgment." But if God's holiness necessitate this dealing with His own people, what shall be the judgment of those who obey not the gospel of God? Inflicted no longer in chastening mercy, but when the day of grace and trial shall be over, what will be the pure wrath of God upon sin in their case?



## SAVED BY GRACE.

### A TRUE STORY.

"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 to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that BELIEVETH."—ROMANS X, 2, 3, 4.

I have been one of the most self-righteous men that ever lived. For years I have groaned under my folly, expecting to find peace by regulating my life according to the Word of God. I could not but believe the Bible true, which told so plainly the secret evils of my heart. So I sought carefully for all the commandments of the New Testament, but I found no commandments as I understood the word. Oh! yes, I read, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer," or, "For every idle word which men speak they shall be brought into judgment," and others of the same character, but they terrified me. I sought quickly to forget them. I read also, "Seek not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink," but it did not seem to be for me; my daily labour brought in abundantly. I read also, "Sell what ye have, and give to the poor," and then I wished, "Oh! that I were only rich, that I might sacrifice all."

Then I found baptism and the Lord's Supper; and, in my anxiety to do everything, I took them for commandments. But, after doing all, and living an irreprouchable church-life, I got no settled peace. The "rejoice evermore" of the Bible was a mockery to me. When I was baptized, I expected some mysterious change, but there was none. I wept at the Lord's table; but there was no peace. I prayed in secret and in public, often so earnestly that others thought me mighty in prayer; but yet there was no peace. "O Lord!" I cried in my agony, "why hast thou not been plain in Thy Word, that I might know exactly what to do? I

would run and do it even at the peril of my life." I now visited the sick, and spent much time in reading the Word of God, and still more time in prayer. I preached too—yes, dear reader, I preached—I pretended to be a bearer of glad tidings, while my own heart writhed in agony. What did I preach? What others had preached to me: "Do thy best, give the glory to God; be a valiant soldier of Jesus Christ, and then He will save thee." But no peace! no peace!! In spite of all this supposed duty fulfilled, there was no peace!!!

One day I called on a sick man, and quickly introduced the subject of religion, as that was my object in calling. "Ah, sir," he said, "they used to tell me to do my best, and I tried and tried, until I found there was no best to be reached. When I examined myself, I found I was still the same old sinner. Then I watched my instructors, to see if I could detect in them what I found in myself, and they failed so visibly to live up to what they taught and professed, that I set them all down as hypocrites, and turned infidel. But here, read this;" and he passed to me a Testament, open at Romans iii. I had often read it before; but now the declaration, "There is none righteous—no not one," was strangely solemn to me. I read on: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." And as I read, the Holy Ghost opened my blinded heart, and I beheld it all. Then and there, in that log cabin, I got what Cornelius got when Peter told him that remission of sins was by believing in Jesus. (Acts x., 43.) But, oh, the shameful pride of the natural heart! I felt like breaking forth in "Glory! glory! to the Son, who has met all the requirements of justice against me, and has given me

eternal life by simply believing that 'it is finished!'" Yet I stifled it. What! I, who had been a church member for years, and a good one too, I acknowledge that I was then only brought to the knowledge of the truth! It was too humiliating; it is not so now. Jesus, the mighty Saviour, is also a sweet and meek teacher; and when we get acquainted with Him we learn the sweetness of hiding our poor mean self, and showing Him only.

And you, dear reader, where are you? Are you praying, too? Are you seeking after the commandments to do them? Are you proposing to make Jesus your model before you know Him as your Saviour, your peace, your righteousness, your sanctification, your all? You may try and try again; but at last you will look back and say with me, "What a bottomless pit this doing is!"

But I have a brother whom I loved as my own soul. My soul went after him. My treasure was too great to be hoarded. I wrote to him, and told him that I had been blind, but now I saw. I told him of that man that is called Jesus, of the work which He finished on the cross, and of the wonderful results of simply believing on Him. He replied "that he was in great distress sometimes, and did not know whom to believe. One said, Do this; another said, Do that; and all seemed earnest. It was very puzzling." I blessed God for this, for it showed that the Holy Ghost was dealing with his soul.

One day he wrote, "All you tell me is true. I have compared it with the Word. One thing only I cannot understand. You say, 'it is useless to try to better that which cannot be bettered,' and add, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.' Surely you do not mean to say we must not strive to improve ourselves, else how could the Lord have said, 'Except your righteousness exceed that

of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven?"

I prayed to the Lord that He would guide me in my answer, and thought of the joy of being made the instrument in bringing my dear brother to Jesus. I then replied, "Yes, that is just what I meant to say. I meant that it is needless, and even folly, to strive to better what cannot be bettered. 'Ye must be BORN AGAIN.' We are completely lost, without hope, desperately wicked. Nor does the Lord anywhere promise, as so many pretend, the strength needed to do anything towards our own salvation; and you have no right to pray for it. You certainly have never understood the words, 'For by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight,' or you could not expect ever to accomplish more in that way than the Scribes and Pharisees. The Lord takes them for examples because they were the leaders of the people. You will never be able to accomplish more in that way than they did, pray and strive as you may. Your only hope is in what another, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for us. This is humiliating, but there is no other way. 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.' This is the testimony of the whole word. Believe, and you are saved."

A few days after I received his answer. "Give glory to God, my beloved brother (doubly so now). I see! I see!! Jesus, and Jesus *alone*, saves me. He is now my all. Since yesterday, it seems, I understand more than half the word, which before was all darkness. I received your letter yesterday morning, and, as usual, I read it over and over. I read the passages you mentioned, and they were there. I could not deny it. But I was miserable. I went to my task heartlessly and insensible. Towards evening a gleam of hope reached

me. I fell on my knees and prayed, and while there the whole redemption which is through Christ Jesus was opened to me. I desired to see and feel it with such force that my heart might leap for joy, but I only got a deep, solemn, strange peace within. My wonder is that in view of such a salvation I can remain so calm. I almost tremble lest I should lose such a precious rest."

Yes, glory to Thee, O my God! Glory to Thee for such a salvation. Glory be to Thy name for ever that, in Jesus, my brother also is safe. We are safe for evermore!

Dear reader, are you safe? Some will say, "I think so," when they have undergone some strong emotion or excitement. But can you say "Yes" in the depth of your soul—a quiet, happy "Yes," in the presence of Him who has seen you from your first breath, and has known your most secret thoughts, because you know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin? Alas! how many there are who, in face of the repeated declarations of God's word that they are not only "condemned already," but are "dead in sins," go about to establish their own righteousness. Conscious that they cannot render a perfect obedience even according to their own estimate of it, they make up a code of their own and call it their duty. And in doing what they call their duty they are smoothly, religiously sliding to hell. Reader, have you ceased from your own works and taken the place of "him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly?" Then also do you assuredly know "the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works."

L.

## “THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW.”

“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace.”—Rom. vi. 14.

It might be well to put to oneself the question, as to this familiar and important passage of Scripture, Is the doctrine one made good in my own soul, or does it in reality seem impracticable? Not that we would avow the latter conclusion in words; yet such may be the secret thought, and govern the life, nevertheless. Complete deliverance from the power of sin, that we may live to God, may seem too much to accept as ours, and we may remain content with less. This, indeed, is the position we naturally and constantly tend to become settled in. But let us look at the truth of the matter, and how precious a truth it is for us. We are permitted and called upon to yield ourselves to God (v. 13), and told, as to practice, that sin shall not have dominion over us. We are free then, and made free from sin's bondage, that we may yield ourselves unto God. We are addressed as those whose desires are now according to the new nature, Godward, and to whom, therefore, it is joy to be free to live unto Him.

But let us compare with this truth a verse in the 7th of Romans, which many hold to as the true Christian experience to the end, that is v. 15, Rom. vii.: “For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I.” Now, this experience, instead of being true and right Christian experience, is a plain contradiction of the doctrine already set forth in chap. vi., where, as just seen, we are told to yield ourselves to God, and that sin shall not have dominion over us. That is, in Rom. vii., 15, &c., it is said, I am in *bondage*; I do what I hate—who will deliver me? *He doesn't know about deliverance*, whereas in Rom. vi. it is declared, you are not in *bondage*, but

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free. Could anything be more opposite? Again, in Rom. vii., it is the law that occupies him, as being under it, and it condemns him and becomes death to him. In chap. vi., on the contrary, it is said, ye are not under the law, but under grace, and *therefore* sin shall not have dominion over you. There is another thing important to consider here. The experience in Rom. vii. is of one who, instead of going on as if such a bondage were a necessary thing to the end, falls right into despair, and does not go on at all nor pretend to, until he can raise the song of deliverance, which he does immediately. For no sooner does he discover his own helplessness than he looks away to Christ and sees Him as his deliverer, and cries, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. That is, first comes experience of what self is, with groaning under bondage; then comes a shout of triumph, a cry of deliverance through Christ, and the doctrine is realized with joy, that sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace. That is, in the sixth chap. the doctrine is stated, in the seventh the experience that conducts to the realization of it. How thoroughly different, then, instead of being the same! distress of soul at realizing what bondage to sin is, and looking away immediately to Christ and rejoicing in deliverance, from going on contentedly as if bondage were the only condition of life. If, then, it is said the 7th of Romans is proper Christian experience, it may be replied, Which experience? for there are two kinds: the first of distress and bondage, the second of deliverance and joy: the first, occupation with self and law; the second, rejoicing in Christ as a deliverer. Therefore, when one has said, Who shall deliver me from this body of death; and, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, he has done forever with the bondage which forced the words, "What I hate, that

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do I," and "Who shall deliver me?" He has found a deliverer. How, then, can he be still seeking one, and in bondage? If the soul has known Christ as deliverer, it is no longer in bondage: it is prepared for the word and rejoices in it, "Yield yourselves unto God."

What, therefore, Christ has achieved for the believer as a present thing, is not only justification, but deliverance from sin, that we may live a life of holiness to God; and the verse we begin with declares we can so live, free from sin's bondage, because we are not under the law, but under grace.

What, then, can be said of the position so many Christians take as to this doctrine? On this point we purpose saying a few words; but before doing so, let us consider the way of this deliverance as set forth in the last verse of the 7th chap., and in the first few verses of the 8th, which may help in the after consideration of the other point. So then, says the Apostle, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. That is, there is within him abidingly the flesh, which is incurably corrupt, as well as his own renewed will to serve God. This he can now calmly consider and declare (though before the cause of distress). "For there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." It is not now self that occupies him, and the attempt to change the flesh; but Christ and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For we have life now in Christ risen from the dead, having been identified with Him in His death; and we are therefore clear out from and beyond all place or question of condemnation and the power of sin, being in Christ. This is known not by experience, but by faith. It is a truth to be received and rejoiced in; for



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what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (which explains the bitter experience of chap. vii.), God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (which shows the way of deliverance), that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. That which troubles us, sin in us, we now know has met its just and full condemnation upon the cross, and we are not identified with it, but are free. We are now therefore undeceived, and know that we carry an enemy within, to whom we are to give no license, while we live unto Christ and do all things in His name. Before, the back was to Christ, whilst all attention was given to vain wrestling with self. Now all is changed. The back is to self, and the eye ever upon Christ; and if ten times a day we are reminded of the unchangeableness of the flesh, it is no longer to sink discouraged, but to give thanks for our deliverance through Christ; and in result there is growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, a path of increasing knowledge of our weakness and wretchedness, but also of joy and peace in the deliverer.

Thus we have completed, in these first few verses of the 8th chap., the statement of the doctrine as to our position; begun in the 6th chap., and interrupted, so to speak, by the 7th, to give the soul's experience in realizing it.

Thus is it true that we are no longer in bondage to sin, for Christ has delivered us. We are not compelled to do what we would not, but having got our freedom from sin, we may now yield ourselves unto God. Certainly the flesh is not eradicated. On the contrary, we have now begun to know what it is, that we may deny ourselves and live to Christ. Watchfulness is produced

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against the deceitfulness of the heart, prayerfulness through knowing where our strength lies, and love as we know the love of Christ, and grace is apprehended. Groaning because there is nothing within us to rest upon is now vain. What takes its place is praise for what He is, and we glory in the Lord. Which, then, is the more honoring to the Lord—to profess still to be in bondage, or to acknowledge and rejoice in our deliverance, wrought by Himself and at such a price? And do we not know the purpose?—that we should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

What can be said, then, of an experience such as that of Rom. vii., continuing to the end of life, so that we have to say, "What I would not, that I do?" It is plain that such a thing could not be; for the experience of the 7th Rom. conducts immediately to the knowledge of deliverance. The soul is so deeply in earnest that there is no rest short of deliverance. And, to such, deliverance comes immediately; for we no sooner know our own nothingness than we discover all fulness in Christ. The real difficulty is being content with shortcoming instead of holiness. That is the position of many rather than being in the 7th Rom., as it is said, which sets forth no continuous condition or experience, but just where strength does not lie, and where it does, that we may live unto God; for holiness is here the subject. The only resting-point, then, for the soul, is to know our sweet privilege and power to live wholly to God; and that state in which we had to say, "What I would not that I do," we have been delivered from. In fact, rather, we were never in such place, but it only states the experience of one renewed in mind, but looking in the wrong direction for help. Therefore, to say, "What I would not, that I do," is simply contrary to **Christian doctrine**, and for one to use it thus, as often

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used, is using error for truth, and is just as if a traveller were to go a certain road, when a guide-board was distinctly pointing in the opposite direction. Paul used the words, it is true, but as the words of one not yet knowing the full truth. The truth set free, and gave joy and thanksgiving, not bondage and distress. To be content, then, with shortcoming as necessary Christian experience is another thing: it is the very opposite.

But the fact is, when Christians come short—when they sin, it is not doing what they would not, but the sad truth is they are doing what they would; and to say we do what we would not, is only palliating what we are not prepared to unsparingly judge. The Lord has provided deliverance. Who, then, is wanting? Shall we put the blame upon Him by saying we would live to Him only, but we cannot? Because the conscience is exercised, through consciousness of shortcoming, that doesn't show that we do what we would not. It may be there is desire to do better, and even live wholly for Christ; and yet the will is unbroken. We would like to be happier in the Lord, but we also like something else better; for we are free, as we see by the words, "Yield yourselves," &c., and "Yield not," &c., and we choose to yield ourselves to self and sin. Of course, one may be in bondage, not knowing yet the way of deliverance; but, as already said, that cannot be an abiding condition if there is sincerity. Deliverance will soon follow, for Christ is not wanting. But we speak of resting contentedly, or avowedly at least, in bondage as if a necessary state. The obstacle in the way of souls getting deliverance from this state is, sad as it may be to say it, indifference; being contented to go as in the past, and as others, making shortcoming our standard and not Christ, and the consequence is dullness, weariness and weakness, and love of the world instead of joy

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and strength in the Lord. The same is true of the failure of those who have truly known and rejoiced in deliverance. It is not at all the experience of Rom. vii. over again, that is, doing what we would not. This is impossible, for deliverance is ours; but we have yielded, through lack of watchfulness, to the power of Satan and the deceitfulness of our own hearts. Let us remark again how totally different all this is from the state of soul in Rom. vii. There it is altogether another thing. It is not a yielding to temptation that is spoken of, but perfect and sincere desire to serve God, but not knowing how: ignorance of the truth; that is, it sets forth the utter helplessness of the renewed mind apart from Christ. Complete dependence, ever looking upwards, is the only strength. But yielding to temptation, need it be said, is another thing, and demands, in order that communion and joy may be restored, self-judgment: real self-judgment, that goes deep and reaches the root of the difficulty. Sincerity will now bring, in failure, not knowledge of truth already known, but confession of sin; that the soul may get free from the darkness with which carelessness and disobedience had for the time surrounded it, and the eye be again set upon Christ. But in the soul whose case is set forth in Romans 7th, self-judgment is not wanting, but the knowledge of the truth. No one who knows the truth has to say he is not able to live altogether to Christ. How precious and joyful to know it!

It is not denied, there may be again and again in failure a groping for light without result, joy being absent, which may seem similar to Rom. vii.; but true confession is all that is wanting for restoration. It may be long delayed, the difficulty great, but the difficulty is only in the subtilty of the flesh, which leads us not only to do evil, but to cherish it in secret, to our sorrow.

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As in the case of Achan in the camp, the evil must be brought to light and judged, before we can go on with God. But this is not bondage, for we are delivered and remain so; but it is yielding to sin and clinging to it. How important to see and ever keep in mind the distinction, that we may realize the blessed truth that we are not under the law, but under grace.

It is not, then, said, "Ye shall not sin," but, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." But it is said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Therefore, if I am conscious of shortcoming, I am sure where the fault lies; for I am *free* to live to Christ. Therefore, put side by side the facts that I am conscious of not living wholly to God, and on the other that I am free to do so, and we see how grace brings the sin home to one's own door and produces confession; and with real confession there is immediate restoration, for through grace our shortcoming has brought no cloud upon God's favor, and no change in our position in love before Him in Christ; for as He is, so are we in this world. Therefore, I am still as ever in God's presence, and with this truth made good in the heart comes action to correspond to such a blessed and holy place. How far, then, is grace from producing carelessness! We see, rather, how it is the only power for holiness. But what keeps us often in trouble is, that we forget grace, and having come short, we deem ourselves to be then at a distance from God. And, as in grace we are conscious of being near to God, and action corresponds, so, forgetting grace and taking a place of distance, action will equally correspond, and there is no fruit to God. We have not, then, to work our way back to God's favor when we have sinned; but, through grace, the knowledge of that unchanging favor being ever ours finds us in our sin, produces confession, and lifts the eye again to Christ.

We change : He changes not. Hardness of heart had made it seem as if a mist or cloud had come between us and His countenance of love ; but a broken will has opened the eye to see Him we had forgotten, and His countenance of love unchanged. He seeks us from all the places to which we wander, for He gave Himself to save us. He is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. How sure a dependence ! But we need to learn that He is our dependence, that we may know the meaning of the words, we are those that "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh." May the Lord keep us from self-confidence, which so sadly betrays, and give confidence in Christ, which is strength for the whole way.

E. S. L.

## "THE VISION OF THE ALMIGHTY."

NUMBERS XXIV. 4-6.

Would we have happy thoughts about the saints ? we must rise up to what the Church of God really is to God. We must get "the vision of the Almighty," (the knowledge of the beauty and comeliness of the Church in all Christ's perfectness) in order to have our souls soft, and tender, and humble about what passes around. If we do not see this we shall not be able to maintain the sense of Christ's love. And, further, unless by the power of the Spirit we get away from circumstances, so as to see the Church, and the saints individually, as Christ sees them, instead of seeking to nourish and cherish them as Christ does, we shall be disappointed. This often makes us angry ; it should not, but it does. We shall either lower our standard, and be content with conformity to the world in the saints, or become discontented and judicial, angry and bitter against them,

the flesh being disappointed and vexed. Faith assumes the acceptance of the saints in Christ, while it seeks in the exercise of godly and gracious discipline that they should be maintained and bloom in the fragrance of Christ's grace.

"As the valleys are they spread forth, as the trees of lign aloes which Jehovah has planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." What a most blessed picture! And could we be happy in seeing them stunted, dishonouring the Lord? The glory of Christ is concerned; He gets His character from us. Paul says to the saints at Corinth. (not "Ye ought to be," but) "*Ye are the Epistle of Christ, written with the Spirit of the living God.*" No, I must grieve when I find in them that which is contrary to their beauty in Christ. They are "*as trees of lign aloes, and as cedar trees.*" It is not merely that God has not seen iniquity in them—He has seen beauty.

O beloved, our souls need to see the Church, and the saints individually, thus in God's vision, with our eyes open, in the Spirit: otherwise we shall not get into the power of God's thoughts. We do not want "the vision of the Almighty" in order to see that a *saint* is a saint; neither do we want "open" eyes, to discover inconsistencies in the walk of our brethren. We do want to rise up, and have our eyes open to see, as God sees, this beauty and glory of the Church.

God is in possession of us.

And remember this was said in the very presence of Balak. It is blessed we should have the certainty of these things in the midst of Satan's power.

What does David say? "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." The enemies can only look on and see how blessed I am, while I feast on what God has provided. "Thou anointest my head

with oil; my cup runneth over." Not only have I got mercy and peace, but I have understood its fulness—an overrunning cup. He can both dwell upon the proved faithfulness of God, and count upon it for the future also; as he goes on to say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," and finishes with, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"

We have the strength of God's love to think of for present comfort, and where there is a right view of the beauty and comeliness of the Church, and yet of her failure, there will be great humbleness and tenderness of spirit towards the Lord, and towards one another.

The Lord grant we may not sit down content in wretched coldness of heart, with evil in ourselves, or in our brethren. The waters of God are at the root of the plant, however miserable the pruning. How precious this! May we rise up in the sense of the beauty we have in God's mind, to delight ourselves in Him who is our comeliness, to glory in him who is God's delight, and our joy and glory. Amen.

J. N. D.

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## THE KINGDOM OF THE ABSENT KING.

### (4.) HARVEST TIME.

The separation, which men's hands are thus declared incompetent for, remains for angels' hands in the day of the harvest of Christendom. They are the reapers then. The field is to be cleared of wheat and tares alike; and at one moment it is bidden both to gather the tares in bundles to be burnt, and to gather the wheat into the



barn. Thus solemnly the day of Christian profession ends. But let us look a little more closely at the order and manner of it, which is of the greatest importance in order to understand it rightly.

"Gather together *first* the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." There is no actual burning yet; and there is no removal from the field. It is a separation of the tares *in* the field, so as to leave the wheat distinct and ready for the ingathering. In what manner, we must refrain from conjecturing; whether it will be gradually or suddenly effected, we do not know. The separation will be, however, made, and the true people of the Lord will stand in their own distinct company at last, when that day is come. There will follow then, *not* the removal of the tares, but of the wheat. The tares are left in bundles on the field; *the wheat are gathered into the barn.*

We know what that means very well; and how many joyful hopes are crowded into that brief sentence. The scene is pictured for us in 1 Thess. iv. The descent of the Lord into the air; the shout; the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the myriads fallen asleep in Him through the long ages of the past; the change of the living saints throughout the earth; the rise of that glorious company; the meeting, and the welcome; the henceforth "ever with the Lord:" all these are the various parts and features of that which these words figure to us: "Gather the wheat into my barn." Suddenly, we know, this will be. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," this change will be effected; every living saint will be gathered out of the length and breadth of Christendom;\* and it will be left but a tare-field simply, with

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\* There is a notion current among many who believe in the Lord's coming, that only those who are in a certain state of preparation among the saints

its tares gathered and bound in bundles, ready for the burning.

And where are the barren and blighted ears of false profession? Where is he of the stony ground? where the man in whom the good seed of the word was choked with cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and he brought no fruit to perfection? We have seen that the "tares" are not simply such, but the fruit of Satan's perversion of the Word. They are not those of whom the Apostle Paul speaks as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;" but rather they are those, whether teachers or taught, to whom apply the words of another apostle, concerning "false teachers, who shall privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them," and whose "pernicious ways" *many* shall follow, "by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Pet. ii.) These are the tares of the devil's sowing, and it is important to distinguish them from the mere formalist and unfruitful professor of the truth. It is on account of these, as both Peter and Jude tell us, that the swift and terrible judgment which ends the whole comes. "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all."

And yet the formalist, the man of mere profession, will not escape. In the judgment of the *dead* before the great white throne they will receive according to their deeds as surely as any, but that is long after the scene before us in this parable. Here is a simple question of good wheat for the granary or of tares for the burning. Nothing else is in the field at all. There is

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then living, will be caught up then, and the rest will be left on earth to be purified by the tribulation that follows. I cannot do more than allude to this just now, hoping to answer it fully at some other time. But it is completely contradicted by the words of the parable before us.

no middle class no unfruitful orthodox profession ; all seem to have taken sides, before the solemn close of the time of harvest, either manifestly *for* Christ, or as manifestly against Him. Is this indeed so? and have we warrant for such an interpretation of the language of the parable?

The answer to this is a very solemn one ; and we shall find it in the 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians. In the first epistle the apostle had spoken of "the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of our gathering together to Him." He had assured them that even the sleeping saints would be brought with Christ, when he should come again (1 Thess. iv. 14) ; and that in order to accompany Him so on his return to earth, they would be raised from the dead, and together with all the living ones of that day, be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Thus when he "appeared" to judge the world, they would appear with Him in glory (Col. iii. 4). He could therefore in this second epistle, beseech the Thessalonian Christians, by their knowledge of this coming, and this "gathering," not to be shaken in mind or troubled as supposing or being persuaded that the day of the Lord had already come.\* That day (as all the prophets witness) is the day of the Lord's taking the earth from under man's hand and into His own, the time in which His judgments are upon the earth, and the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. That day, he assures them, shall not come unless there come a *falling away* (an apostacy) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.

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\*Chap. ii. 2: The word rendered "is at hand" in the common version, is the one rendered "present," in opposition to "to come," in Rom. viii. 38, and 1 Cor. iii. 22 ; and so Alford renders it here. It is the only proper rendering. The generality of editors also read "the day of the Lord" instead of "the day of Christ."

Now my object is not with any special application or interpretation of this. So much is manifest, that this "man of sin," whoever he may be, is one who heads up an, or rather "the," apostacy of the latter days. The evil, the mystery of iniquity, was already at work, even in the apostles' days (ver. 7). There was, however, for the present a restraint upon it. When that should be removed the wicked one would be revealed, who was to be destroyed alone, mark, by the Lord's coming (ver. 8).

Thus we are evidently in view of the same period as that contemplated in the parable before us, as well as of the judgment which Jude warns of. The passage in Thessalonians exhibits, however, the "man of sin" as the distinct head and leader of the latter-day apostacy, and moreover declares to us how far this apostacy shall extend. The coming of the "wicked one" is declared to be with a terrible power of delusion which will carry away captive the masses of the unconverted among professing Christians until none of that middle or neutral class remain. "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them *strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, that THEY ALL* might be damned, who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (vs. 9-12).

Thus terribly shall close the history of Christendom. The true saints once taken out of it, the door of grace will be closed for ever upon those who have rejected grace. They will be given over to become, as they speedily will become, from being *unbelievers* of the truth, believers of a lie. The wheat being gathered out of the field, tares alone will be found in it.

The actual burning of the tares is not found in the

parable itself, but in the interpretation of it which the Lord afterwards gives to His disciples. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of this age. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (40-43).

This is when the Lord comes as *Son of man* to take that throne which He has promised to share with His people. Then, when the time of "patience" is over, and the rod of iron shall break in pieces all resistance to the King of kings. Then "judgment"—long separated from it,—"shall return unto righteousness," and the earth shall be freed from the yoke of oppression and the bondage of corruption. It is the time of which the 37th Psalm speaks, when evil-doers shall be cut of: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth" (9); when "yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be; but the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (10, 11).

Some time before will the gathering for heaven have taken place, and the saints have met their Lord, as we have seen. Now in this day of the judgment which prepares the way for the blessing of the earth, they are seen in their heavenly place. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun." Blessed words, which speak of their association with their Lord in other ways than simply as sharers of His rule with the "rod of iron." For "unto you that fear my name," says the word by Malachi to Israel, "shall the *Sun of righteousness* arise

with healing in His wings." Who bears that name, we know; and how it speaks of earth's night-time passed away. But "when Christ who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." So, as the Sun, shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. With Christ, like Him, they shine; themselves subject in one sphere, if rulers in another; but subject with all the heart's deep devotion, where service is fullest liberty, serving as sons Him whom they call, at the same time, God and Father.

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## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, (*Continued.*)

We have had then, in chaps. iii. and iv., the two fundamental things in Christianity: eternal life, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. We now proceed to consider in detail, in the following chapters, the characteristics and accompaniments of this new life which God gives.

And first of all, the relation of the law to this life is taken up in chap. v. The question is, if given by Moses, why given? Has it power to quicken, to give life? And if not, what claim has it upon the life God gives?

The scene at Bethesda is the Divine answer. There was healing virtue in the pool, no doubt; not, however, proper to the water itself. "An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water." Then for a moment there was power for him that stepped in first. Help was conditioned upon having strength to avail oneself of the remedy.

The law had no power *in itself* to heal or save. Pure law, as when it was given the first time at Sinai, promised continuance only to the righteous man who kept it. It had no provision for failure, no *grace* for the *sin-*

ner. It said, "Do, and thou shalt *live*." By sin came death, and passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Therefore he that never *sinned*, could never *die*.

But that law, so given, *found* men sinners, as it finds all to this day. Its tables were broken at the foot of the mount. Its dispensation was over before it had well begun. And under it, men still know well they can no more stand than did Israel.

But the second trial was a longer one, for God came in with goodness and long-suffering mercy. The tables came down from the mount again, and it was still, "This do, and thou shalt live." But the angel's hand had troubled the water now, for whereas the law could only speak of death for sin, God had revealed Himself as "*forgiving* iniquity, transgression and sin."

There was now, then, a "Bethesda."\* And as the water "troubled" by the angel, healed, so the law was to be His ministry of help for sinful men. Not law alone, or by its own efficacy, but law and grace combined; not water only, but troubled water could be this. But thus, now God could say, as He does say in Ezekiel, even of the wicked man, that "when the wicked man turneth from his wickedness and *doeth* that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive" (Ezek. xviii. 27): That is, if he had strength to get into the pool he should be saved.

But where there was not this strength, what remedy? That is the very case before us. The impotent man at Bethesda explains the matter. The very disease for which he needed cure, had taken from him the power which was needed for his cure. Without strength, and without any one to help, he is the very picture of one

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\* "House of healing." Notice, too, that grace is really the "troubling" of law as such. "If it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."—(Rom. xi. 9.)

finding out, what we all must for blessing, that he is not only ungodly, but without strength too. And Jesus does not help him into the pool, nor God help the wicked man to do what is lawful and right, and save himself. He heals by His word, and in a moment.

The antitype goes here, however, as always, beyond the type. It is not power we lack alone, but life. And the doctrine of the chapter, which is developed out of the miracle, goes on to that. The world is under death, and waiting judgment. This is the scene into which the Son of God comes as Worker, with life in Himself (ver. 26), and a life-giving word for others. The dead hear His voice, and hearing, live (25). And those so quickened by Him, shall not come into judgment, for He is Himself the judge of all, and has absolute power to quicken whom He will (21). The resurrection of the body will be the full display of this power, exercised in the meantime over the souls of men (25-29).

Law could not help the dead. Conditions, however easy in themselves, would not suit impotence. In the matter of giving life, the Son of God is the only real Worker. Moses could only accuse sinners (45), but if they believed *his* testimony, it would shut them up to faith in Christ. For in the Divine intent, Hagar was only handmaid unto Sarah,—the law to grace. Truly convicted souls must needs find (having themselves nothing) their all in Jesus. And the Scriptures, in which they thought they had eternal life, spake of Him ever and only as the One in whom it was (39).

But if the law did not give eternal life, then, what *claim* had it upon the life given by Another? Plainly, none. Therefore He says to the impotent man, "Take up thy bed and walk," though "the same day was the sabbath" (8, 9). For the walk of the one healed by grace is to be no longer measured by the law,



but by the *word of the One who maketh whole*. The world, too, has forfeited its sabbath-rest by sin; nor could Love rest in such a scene: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Law then has no claim upon the soul alive to God. And thus the judgment, inseparable from law, is not for it. Here once more there is contrast between the type and antitype. To the man cured at Bethesda, Jesus says, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (14); but to him that heareth His word, and believeth on Him that sent Him, Jesus says, he "hath everlasting life, and shall *not* come into judgment,\* but is passed from death unto life" (24).

Whither, then, does the word of Him that maketh us whole lead us? It is this that the sixth chapter now points out. First, His own path through the world, for it is His own path He gives us. Then ours, with its wilderness-trial, but its wilderness-mercies too, and the daily manna, our sustenance by the way.

First, His own path.

He is again at Galilee, the place of mercy, and He is manifesting Himself there as the Sustainer of all. \* Five barley loaves and two small fishes feed five thousand men. But they have no heart for Himself, no sense of the Divine goodness which has met them there. They eat of the loaves and are filled, and would fain secure the fountain from whence came such supply. "They would come and take Him by force and make Him a King," and from such carnal homage He withdraws Himself. Full of meaning is that preliminary statement that "the passover was nigh," for such reception was indeed rejection; and the voices of those here ready to

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\* The same word as that translated "judgment" in verses 22, 27, and 30 of this chapter, though here "condemnation," and verse 29 "damnation."

make Him a king, would soon be clamouring, "We have no king but Cæsar."

He retires then, "Himself alone," leaving His disciples even, behind. And they, so left, "when even was come, went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum." Difficulties ensue; night falls, and a contrary wind springs, and the sea rises. What a picture of our path through the world in the absence of Jesus! But He does not leave them long: "when they had rowed about five and twenty, or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship." What comfort for them! No, they are "afraid." Are *you* afraid, believer, when you hear of the coming of Jesus? You want His reassuring word, "It is I, be not afraid." And when these heard that, "then they willingly received Him into the ship: and"—mark,—"*immediately* the ship was at the land whither they went." Blessed ending of all sorrow, perfect consummation of all joy, will be for us indeed, the coming of Jesus. Our ship will be at the land. "Ever with the Lord" says *all*.

Thus we have our path pictured for us in the Lord's absence: its trials and difficulties, the course of this world contrary, our toil through it, the happy ending of it all. Now, as elsewhere in this Gospel, out of these materials is developed, with many additional things, the doctrine of the chapter; in which we see the "life" of the believer putting on its pilgrim-character,—its sorrows, its sustainment, and its joys; not without intimations—alas,—of how little known it is practically by us as it ought to be. And "they said one to another, It is manna: for they *wist not what it was*."

The development is very beautiful. To the multitude who have followed Him to the other side of the sea, He explains the spiritual mystery of that of which they saw.

only the outside form. The Son of man,—He does not say “Son of God” here, because everything in this depends on His humanity,—the Son of man, as the one on whom the Father could set the “seal” of perfect approbation,—*God’s* man, true, spotless man, had meat to give them which “*endured*” (the *meat itself* endured) unto eternal life” (27). Yes, the precious reality of the Man Christ Jesus,—food as it is for our souls down here,—lasts as long as the life it feeds. We labour not for the life—we have it. We do, we should labour for the meat that feeds it.

He tells us what it is: the true bread from heaven, the true manna; satisfying by the way the soul of him who yet waits for his proper portion in the day of resurrection (32-40). There the pilgrim-character of our life comes out. And the Lord dwells upon it, repeating more than once that he that believes on Him both has as a present thing, eternal life, and shall have the resurrection belonging to that life. —

But it is not only the Man Christ Jesus that we have in this “bread from heaven.” He gives His flesh for the life of the world. The flesh and the blood are separate: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you; whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (53, 54). Sweet and yet solemn that reiterated assurance! The mystery of His death, His cross, we are thus called to enter into, and near and intimate is the place this apprehension of Himself, the Crucified One, brings the soul into. “My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.”

But it tries the soul nevertheless. A rejected, crucified, but ascended Lord, bidding into participation with

Himself in His rejection, teaching the lesson of death, and to wait for resurrection as the day for the reception of all one's real portion,—is, alas, a stumbling-block to more than carnal Jews. “*From that time, many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.*” So much so, that He questions even the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Peter answers for them, what indeed keeps faith steadfast spite of all the trial of the way,—not only they had nowhere else to go, for eternal life was in Him alone,—but also that this Son of man was the Son of the living God for him. Ah yes, the lowlier the path, the darker the shadows over it, the more shines out that glory. Forsaken, rejected, crucified,—at each step downward in the path of that humiliation, brighter that glory shines; “glory, as of the Only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Yet, amid the number of this chosen twelve, there was one who was “a devil.”

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I thank Thee, O my gracious God,  
 For all Thy love to me,  
 As deep, as high, as long, as broad  
 As Thine eternity.  
 And when I far from Thee did rove  
 In paths of sin and shame,  
 'Twas then thou call'd'st me in Thy love,  
 And gav'st me to the Lamb.  
 Oh! happy day! when drawn by love  
 To Thee, my Saviour God,  
 My guilty conscience came to prove  
 The power of Jesus' blood.  
 And happier still Himself to know,  
 The changeless One on high,  
 Whose love led Him to stoop so low  
 To suffer and to die.  
 Praise, praise to Thee, my God, I give,  
 Who gav'st Thy Son for me;  
 I'll render praises while I live,  
 And through eternity.

J. W. S.

## HOMeward BOUND.

"Homeward bound!" Such was the thought that struck me as I found beneath my feet the solid boards of the vessel which was to bring me back over the Atlantic to the country that had given me a birth-place. And with thoughts of home before one, the heart is naturally filled with joy. There are all the associations, the interests, the pleasures peculiar to that place—and these seem to be also the dearer when distance either of space or time has been experienced. At home there is no sense of strangership—no idea of breaking in upon a circle to which one does not belong—no feeling of diversity of interest—no fear of the absence of sympathy or love. Home gives the idea of rest, of repose, of tranquility, of serenity and of joy.

And I was bound homeward. The bow of the vessel pointed there, and each revolution of the machinery brought us so much further on the way. It may be, too, that the anticipation of reaching home added its own charm—for in earthly matters "distance lends enchantment"—and the object attained is very seldom equal, in its gratification, to the prospect. Realisation comes short of anticipation. Still—home was before me, and each moment sped us on, and the heart was light and buoyant and joyful. But in my reverie, thoughts of another home and of being bound thither filled my heart likewise—a Home truer, dearer, more abiding, and, may I say, better known—where the realization will far, far exceed the brightest anticipation—where a rest remains never to be broken—where the eye can never be dimmed by sorrow, nor the circle broken by Death—a Home more real than any earthly home can be—one "reserved in heaven, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away."

But whilst on board that vessel, some, like myself, had prospects of home before them, others were bound for a land which had, for them, no such comforts. To them all would be strange, unfamiliar, unknown, and perhaps unpleasant. Yet we had all embarked, and on we had to go. And thus a contrast arose in my mind— all are going—some to the glad welcome of a home, others to neither the one nor the other. Again the thought pressed itself on me—All are travelling onward, swiftly, surely—some to yonder bright inheritance prepared for them by the Lord. Others, alas, are bound for the homeless, joyless regions of woe. Solemn embarkation! deeply serious is the voyage of life. Well may we ponder the following hymn—

“ Passing onward, quickly passing,  
But I ask thee *whither bound*,  
Is it to the many mansions,  
Where eternal rest is found? ”

Pause, dear reader, and suffer me to ask you this solemn question, “ WHITHER BOUND? ” What is your port? what your destination? You have embarked on the ocean of life—what awaits you on the other side—on the distant shore?

Say not that in these matters none can tell. We can tell. As well might you affirm that none can tell whether he was homeward or outward bound. In the case in hand all knew the port for which our vessel was bound. It was a settled point with us all. True, the vessel might have foundered or have come to some sad ending. That event was far from impossible. Circumstances might have arisen to master her power or to baffle the skill of her officers and crew. Neither the vessel nor her crew were omnipotent. If it had been so, then that impossibility would have been removed.

But this is the case now contemplated—the excellency

of the vessel secures the result. And when eternity is under consideration, that which secures heaven for the believer is that he is "*in Christ*." Oh! with what unspeakable calmness can he face the storms of life—be these storms what they may—as he hears the peace-giving assurance of the Lord, "because I live, ye **SHALL** live also." He who has outlived the waves and billows of the cross and the grave, and who is now risen and glorified, is alive for evermore—and because He lives so shall also the believer. True enough, before him lies the voyage with its trials and temptations—and his need of vigilance and dependence and practical holiness—yet the excellence of the vessel secures him—his hope, his boast, his confidence are all in Christ.

Oh! happy portion! Christ for the vessel and Christ for the goal, and being with Christ, too, in His presence—in the Father's house of Home joys—Home friendships, Home associations and Home interests in yonder Home of Homes.

Reader, say, will you be there?

J. W. S.

## THE KINGDOM OF THE ABSENT KING.

### (5.) SECULAR POWER, AND "THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH."

Thus we have compassed the whole history of the kingdom of the absent One, up to its solemn close in judgment at His coming. The two parables now before us take us back from this, to look at the same scene in other aspects.

And the two parables, however dissimilar in other respects, have this in common (wherein they differ from the former two), that they speak, not of individuals, but of the mass, as such. They give us the outward

form as well as the inward spiritual reality of what Christendom as a whole becomes—of what it *has* become, we may very simply say, for the facts are plain enough to all, whether men question or not the application of the parables to those facts.

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” (Mt. xiii. 31, 32).

Of this parable the Lord gives us no direct interpretation. It is stated, however, to be another similitude of the same kingdom spoken of by the former ones. And as Scripture must ever be its own interpreter, and we are certainly intended to understand the Lord's words here, we may be confident the key to the understanding of it is not far off. Let any one read the following passage from the book of Daniel and say, if it does not furnish that key at once:—The words are the words of the King of Babylon.

“Thus were the visions of mine head upon my bed. I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and *the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof*, and all flesh was fed of it.” (Dan. iv., 10-12.)

This is interpreted of the King himself (22): “It is *thou*, O King, that art grown and become strong.” The figure therefore,—which we have elsewhere, and al-



ways with the same meaning (as Ezek. xvii. 5, xxxi. 3-6,)—is that of worldly power and greatness. But the strange thing in Matth. xiii., is, that “the least of all seeds” should grow into such a tree. For the seed, here as elsewhere, is “the word of the kingdom” (19). And we have seen already how men treated that word. The kingdom of the Crucified could have but little attraction for the children of the men who crucified Him. Human hearts are sadly too much alike for that. How could, then, a great worldly power come of the sowing of the Gospel in the world?

Granted, that it *has* become this, is this a sign for good or the reverse? How could “My kingdom is *not* of this world” shape with this? And what proper mastery of this world could there be,—what overcoming of its evil with Divine good, where three parts of the professed disciples were, according to the first parable, unfruitful hearers merely, and (according to the second) Satan’s tares had been sown broad-cast among the wheat?

But if we want plain words as to all this, we may find them in abundance; and if, on the one hand, we know by what is round us, that professing Christianity has become a power in the world, we may know on the other, both by practical experience, and the sure word of God, that it has become such by making its terms of accommodation with the world. It has bought off the old, inherent enmity of the world at the cost of its Lord’s dishonour, by the sacrifice of its own Divine, unworldly principles. He who runs may read the “perilous times” of the latter days, written upon the fore-front of the present days (2 Tim. iii., 1-5).

Yes, the little seed has become indeed a tree, but the “birds of the air” are in its branches. Satan himself \*

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\* Comp. vs. 4 and 9.

has got lodgment and shelter in the very midst of the "tree" of Christendom. The "Christian world" is the "world" still; and the "whole world lieth in the wicked one"\* (1 John v. 19). The opposition to Christ and His truth is from within now, instead of from without; none the less, on that account, but all the more deadly.

Rome is the loudest assertor of this claim of power in the world, and what has Rome not done to maintain her claim? Her photograph is in Rev. xvii., xviii. Successor to the "tree"-like power of old Babel, she is called "Eabylon the Great." And she is judged as having, while professing to be the spouse of Christ, made guilty alliance with the nations of the world: "for all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies" (ch. xviii. 2). And alas, with the power of Israel's enemy, she has inherited, also, the old antipathy to the people of God: "I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration" (ch. xvii. 6).

This is the full ripe result. The beginning of it is already seen at Corinth even in the Apostle's day: "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. . . . We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised" (1 Cor. iv. 8, 10).

Thus early was the little seed developing; thus quickly did the Christianity of even apostolic days diverge

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\* Not "in wickedness." Compare verse 18; it is the same word.

from that of the apostles. Paul lived to say of the scene of his earliest and most successful labours,—“all that are in Asia have departed from me.” Thus widespread was the divergence. Men that quote to us the Christianity of a hundred or two hundred years from that, had need to pause and ask themselves, what type of it they are following, whether that of degenerate Asia, or “honourable,” worldly Corinth, or what else.

That is the external view, then, which this parable presents, of the state of the kingdom during the King's absence. It had struck its roots down deep into the earth and flourished. Such a power in the world is Christendom this day. Beneath its ample cloak of respectable profession it has gathered in the hypocrite, the formalist, the unfruitful,—in short, the *world*; and the deadliest foes of Christ and of His cross are those nurtured in its own bosom.

But we go on to the other parable for a deeper and more internal view:—

“Another parable spake He unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Mat. xiii. 33).

Now what is “leaven?” It is a figure not unfrequently used in Scripture, and it will not be hard to gather up the instances in which it is applied and explained in the New Testament. We surely cannot go wrong in allowing it thus to interpret itself to us, instead of following our own conjectures.

The following, then, are *all* the New Testament passages:—

Matt. xvi. 6: “Then Jesus said unto them, take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” In the twelfth verse, this is explained: “Then understood they how that He bade them not

beware of the leaven of bread, but of the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

The passages in Mark and Luke are similar (Mark viii. 15 and Luke xii. 1).

In 1 Corinthians v., the apostle is reproofing them for their toleration of the "wicked person" there. "Know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of *malice* and *wickedness*; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

There the "leaven" is *moral* evil, as in the Gospels it was *doctrinal* evil. In Gal. v. 9, (the only remaining passage) it is again doctrinal. "Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law . . . Ye *did* run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth. This persuasion cometh not from him that calleth you. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*"

If we take Scripture, then, as its own interpreter, it must be admitted that "leaven" is always a figure of evil, moral or doctrinal, never of good. But it is possible to define its meaning and that of the parable still more clearly.

It is Lev. ii. that furnishes us in this case with the key. Among the offerings which this book opens with (all of which, I need scarce say, speak of Christ) the meat (or "food") offering is the only one in which no life is taken, no blood shed. It is an offering of "fine flour,"—Christ not in the grace, therefore, of His atoning death, but in His personal perfectness and preciousness as the bread of life, offered to God, no doubt, and first of all satisfying Him, but as that, man's food also,

as He declares: "he that eateth Me, shall even live by Me."

Now it is with this meat-offering that leaven is positively forbidden to be mixed (ver. 11): "No meat offering which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven." True to its constant use in Scripture, as a figure of evil, that which was a type of the Lord Himself was jealously guarded from all mixture with it. Now in the parable "the three measures of meal" are just this "fine flour" of the offering. The words are identical in meaning. The flour is man's food plainly, as the offering is, and thus interpreted spiritually can alone apply to Christ. But here the woman is doing precisely the thing forbidden in the law of the offering: she is mixing the leaven with the fine flour. She is corrupting the pure "bread of life" with evil and with error.

And who is this "woman" herself? There is meaning surely in the figure. And he who only remembers Eph. v., will want no proof that that figure is often that of the Church, the spouse of Christ, and subject to Himself. It may be also as we have already seen the figure of the mere professing body, as the "woman," Babylon the Great, is. In this sense the whole parable itself is simple. It is the too fitting climax of what has preceded it: it is she who has drugged the *cup* in Rev. xvii., for the deception of the nations, adulterating here the *bread* also. The "leaven of the Pharisees"—legality and superstition,—the "leaven of the Sadducees"—infidelity and rationalism,—the "leaven of Herod"—courtierlike pandering to the world,—things not of past merely, but of current history, have been mixed with and corrupted the truth of God. All must own this, whatever his own point of view. The Romanists will say Protestants have done so; the Protestants will in turn

accuse Rome ; the myriads of jarring sects will tax each other ; the heathen will say to one and all : " We know not which of you to believe ; each contradicts and disagrees with the other ; go and settle your own differences first, and then come, if you will, to us."

The leaven is *leavening the whole lump*. The evil is in nowise diminishing but growing worse. No doubt, God is working. And no doubt, as long as the Lord has a people in the midst of Christendom, things will not be permitted to reach the extreme point. But the tendency is downward ; and once let that restraint be removed, the apostacy (which we have seen Scripture predicts) will then have come.

But men do not like to think of this. And I am prepared for the question (one which people have often put, where these things have been so stated) how can the *kingdom of heaven* be like "leaven," if leaven be always evil ? Must not the figure here have a different meaning from that which you have given it ? Must it not be a figure rather of the secret yet powerful influence of the gospel, permeating and transforming the world ?

To which I answer—

1. This is contrary to the tenor of Scripture, which assures us that, instead of Christianity working real spiritual transformation of the world at large, the "mystery of iniquity" was already "working" in apostle's days in it, and that it would work on (though for a certain season under restraint) until the general apostacy and the revelation of the man of sin (2 Thes. ii).

2. It is contrary to the tenor of these parables themselves, which have already shown us (in the very first of them) how little universal would be the reception of the truth : three out of four casts of the seed failing to bring forth fruit.

3. The language from which this is argued,—"the

kingdom of heaven is like unto"—does not simply mean that it is itself like "leaven,"—as they put it, but like "leaven leavening three measures of meal." The *whole parable* is the likeness of the kingdom in a certain state, not the "leaven" merely is its likeness.

Let any one compare the language of the second parable with this, and he cannot fail to see the truth of this:—

<p>VER. 24.          "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a <i>man</i>, which sowed good seed," &amp;c.</p>	<p>VER. 33.          "The kingdom of heaven is like unto <i>leaven</i>, which a woman took," &amp;c.</p>
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Is it not plain that the kingdom is no more simply compared to the "leaven" in verse 33, than to the "man" in verse 24? In each case the whole parable is the likeness.

The kingdom, therefore, need not be bad because the leaven is, nor the leaven good because the kingdom is. And into a picture of the kingdom in its present form, evil may, and alas, must enter, or why judgment, to set it right?

There is indeed but too plain consistency in the view of the kingdom which these parables present; and a uniform progression of evil and not of good. First, the ill-success of the good seed, in the first parable; then, the introduction and growth of *bad* seed, in the second. Then the whole form and fashion of the kingdom changes into the form and fashion of one of the kingdoms of the world. This is the Babylonish captivity of the Church. And lastly, the very food of the children of God is tampered with, and corrupted, until complete apostacy from the faith ensues. Christ is wholly lost, and Antichrist is come.

Here, thank God, the darkness has its bound; and in the last three parables of the chapter, we are to see an-

other side of things, and trace that work of God, which never ceases amid all the darkness ; His, whose

—“every act pure blessing is ;  
His path, unsullied light.”

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### “THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY.”

There are few of my readers who need to be told that the meaning of the word “Church” is, simply, “Assembly.” And yet it would deliver us from a good many wrong thoughts just to remember this. And the uniform translation of the word by “assembly,” in our common version, would set aside some strange interpretations of peculiar texts. Thus, for instance, “the *church* in the wilderness” would surely cease to be quoted as a proof of the identity between the Jewish Assembly and the Christian, if the technical word “church” (which from the habitual use and application seems to justify it) were seen to be the same word by which even the riotous, heathen crowd at Ephesus is designated in Acts xix., 32. Anybody may understand what perplexity it would create in the mind of the reader, if he found it there written of that heathen mob, “the *church* was confused,” or what an absurdity it would naturally appear for anybody to argue the identity of the crowd of idolators there with the Christian “Church,” because the word for “church” was used in their case. Yet, people who should know better use exactly the argument in favour of the Jewish “church in the wilderness,” which they would be ashamed to use (although they might as well do so) in behalf of the crowd of worshippers of “Diana of the Ephesians.”

The definition of the Christian assembly, by which it may be known from any other assembly whatever, is



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plainly given in the heading to this paper. It is the "body of Christ," the company of His members, formed by the uniting action of the Spirit of God, for "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. xii. 13.)

I propose in this paper some brief enquiry as to this "body of Christ," and what the duty of believers is with regard to it. For that some obligation flows from the connection with it, I may be permitted for the present to assume.

In the first place, then, as I have already stated, and as Scripture in so many words assures us, the Church is the "body of Christ," the company of all His real members. This "membership" is the only one acknowledged in the word of God. It has become a current phrase to speak of "members of this or that denomination." Scripture speaks of but one body and one membership in it; Christians, therefore, everywhere "members one of another." Anything narrower than this would be treated by it as plain sectarianism. Nor do we find the expression even, "members of the Church;" that might allow the idea of membership being some more external thing; but there is none outside of the real "body," the "body of Christ."

We become members of this body, too, by no external act or deed, by no will or choice of our own. The custom is for people to say, "I am not a member, I have never *joined*." It is no question of *joining* in this way, but of *being* joined, and that by the Divine act alone, the baptism of the Spirit: "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." This is by no external ordinance, water baptism, or aught else. It is that operation of the Spirit of God, peculiar to Christianity, which began first at Pentecost and has been continued ever since. It is undeniable, however much the Spirit

worked (and He *did* work) in days preceding—the *baptism* of the Holy Ghost was announced for the first time, and as a future thing, by John the Baptist: "He *shall* baptize you with the Holy Ghost." To that promise the Lord distinctly referred after his resurrection, when "being assembled together" with His disciples, "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me: for John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost *not many days hence*." (Acts i. 4, 5.) Pentecost for them fulfilled that promise. And what took place then was not merely therefore a display of miraculous power, such as has long since ceased, but (as the text in 1 Cor. xii. assures us) the formation of the body of Christ then began.

Hence, nowhere before this do we find even a hint of the existence of the body of Christ at all. The Old Testament knows nothing of it.\* Indeed, there was as yet no Head in heaven. Only when God "raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places," was it that He "gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church which is His body." (Eph. i. 20, 23.)

The thought is indeed rooted strongly in the mind of Christians generally, that the Church is the whole company of the saved. To deny the place of the saints of

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\* One passage (Isa. xxvi., 19) has been thought, as applying to the true saints in Israel, to teach that they, too, belonged to the body of Christ. It reads, as they rightly enough correct it, "Thy dead men shall live, my dead body, they shall arise." Here Jehovah, according to the similar figures in Ezek. xxxvii., Dan. xii., etc., speaks of the resurrection of Israel (comp. vs. 14-18) nationally defunct and their hope lost, but to be brought up again from the dead by Jehovah for blessing in millennial days. He, to signify His care for and love to this dead national body, speaks of it as His,—"*My dead body*." It is a singular misconception to take this as applying to the Church, which is never as a body dead at all. Nor does the phrase refer even to the dead saints in Israel, but to the nation at large, as I have said.

Old Testament times to be in the Church which is Christ's body, is with them almost equivalent to denying their participation in salvation. But it is not at all so. They are not only sharers with us in the blessedness of salvation, but also in being children of God and partakers of heavenly glory. These things only the force of constant habits of thoughts has connected together. They are really and widely separate.

Another thing has tended to confirm this view of the matter. The baptism of the Holy Ghost has been confounded with new birth; and therefore it would naturally be supposed that being born again was the entrance into the Church. Thus, either Old Testament saints were not born again (which would be certainly contrary to the truth), or the Church of God must include these.

But the baptism of the Holy Ghost is *not* the same as new birth. The disciples were already born again when the Lord spoke to them of this baptism as what they should receive. And while men had been born of the Spirit all through the old dispensation, the baptism of the Spirit began at Pentecost. Attention to these points will, I believe, clear the mind of a confusion, well nigh universal, as to this.

The New Testament is full of a gift of the Spirit peculiar to the present dispensation, and a thing *super-added* to new birth. Thus in John vii., where the Lord declares of the one who believes on Him, that "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," it is added (v. 39), "But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given], because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Now, there again, we most distinctly find that after the completion of the work of the Lord Jesus, there was a reception of the Spirit by believers, such as never had been before. "The Holy Ghost was not yet,"

is the real language used, which shows it was a personal presence of the Spirit Himself, which was predicted as a distinct thing from anything known before.

Yet He had been working among men, as we know, from the beginning. He had been "in" the prophets who testified of the coming salvation. And to the restored remnant of Israel had Haggai announced the gracious word of Jehovah, "My Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not." (Hag. ii., 5.) In view of this men reasonably ask, what is the difference between the Spirit in prophets and the Spirit in Christians now? of the Spirit remaining in the midst of Israel, and the abiding presence of the Spirit now?

The first question, he who speaks of the Spirit in the prophets answers, making broad distinction between the Spirit of Christ testifying prophetically in them of things now preached, "and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Pet. i., 11, 12.) There is no difficulty in understanding the difference between the Spirit of prophecy bearing witness of coming salvation, and the Holy Ghost sent down to make good the reality of it in the souls of believers now.

And as to the second question, the Spirit remaining in the midst of the remnant of Israel was a very different thing from the Spirit abiding in the believer himself, and making his body His temple; a very different thing also from His baptizing believers into "one body," and that the body of Christ.

Scripture, it is evident, makes a grand and broad distinction between these things. All former presence of the Spirit is so to speak ignored, or presented only as contrast to this marked and striking peculiarity of the Christian dispensation. "The Holy Ghost was not yet," is decisive. And when the Lord Himself, in His last discourse with His disciples prior to His crucifixion, speaks

of the coming of the Comforter, it is to put it again in the strongest possible contrast with anything that had been before. Speaking of His own presence with them He had said long before, "Verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things that ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that ye hear, and have not heard them," (Matt. xiii. 17). Yet now He says of His *departure* from them, and of their *loss* of that great blessing of His personal presence: "It is expedient for you, that I go away." And why? "For if I go not away, the Comforter *will not come unto you*; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you," (John xvi. 7). What a wondrous thing must have been that coming of the Spirit for which it was "expedient" to lose the actual bodily presence of the gracious Lord and Saviour! We look back to those times, and our longing hearts say, O to have seen Him then! But He says Himself, "you are more blessed in the presence of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, than if you had seen me then with your bodily eyes on earth." And, Oh, brethren, do we believe it? Do we realize the precious portion that is ours?

Pentecost was the time of the coming of that Comforter, as we have seen. And how plain it was no question of miraculous gifts, which have long passed away! The very fact that they have passed away, is a sufficient proof of the distinction, for the Lord tells us concerning the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, "He shall abide with you for ever," (John xiv. 16).

The results of that coming, which those miracles at Pentecost were only tongues to proclaim, it is not my intention now to enter into.\* The baptism of believers

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\* A comparison of the following passages may help, however, in the apprehension of these, and show their distinction from anything before known: Gal. iv. 1-6; Rom. viii. 9-17; Eph. i. 13, 14; 2 Cor. i. 20, 21, &c.

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into one body is that which alone we are now speaking of, and we have seen that Scripture speaks of it as a new thing at Pentecost. We have seen too, that it was needful for Jesus to be risen and ascended before the Holy Ghost could be given upon earth, and we can now well understand that necessity in order to the formation of the "body" upon earth, as it was as a risen and ascended man that the Lord actually took the place of "Head over all things to the Church, His body."

Pentecost, then, saw the beginning of this. It is well, however, to remember that it is not to the 2nd chapter of Acts we are to look for the *doctrine* as to it. The Apostle Paul distinctly tells us that the "mystery, hid from ages and from generations," was committed to *him*, in order "to fulfil [or complete] the word of God," (Col. i. 25, 26, and comp. Eph. iii. 1-10). It pleased God in His wisdom not to reveal this mystery at once, but after a certain preparation for it; and it is nowhere save in Paul's writings, that the doctrine of the "body" is taught. All that we see in Acts is that there did then begin an "assembly" to which the Lord daily added those He was saving. And the gift of the Holy Ghost, the characteristic peculiarity of the dispensation, in the first place following baptism, and bestowed by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, marked distinctly what was connected with this manifest display of Divine power. It was not till the first *Gentile* was brought in—Cornelius,—that there was any exception to this order of things. *He* received both, apart from baptism, and apart altogether from Apostles' hands. Thus began the present order of things, if I may so say, now that Apostles have long been absent from the Church.

Thus then began the existence of the Church of Christ on earth. It still continues; and its endowment

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with the Spirit continues still. Miraculous powers are indeed gone ; the Holy Ghost is not ; the Lord's own words guarantee the abiding presence of the "Comforter" with His disciples.

It is now time for the question, which the hearts of many, it may be, have anticipated, "*Where is this 'Church, which is Christ's body,' in the present day ?*"

Ready enough will be the answer, doubtless, too. I shall be reminded of my own statements, perhaps, that this Church is the company of all true believers, and be told that I shall find them scattered throughout the various denominations of Christians.

That is all true—too true. But then if I turn to Scripture, I find *there* another thing altogether from members of Christ scattered through other bodies, whatever they may be. I find these members united together as such, and the body of Christ, the common union of the whole, a body visible, wherein each single member had his recognized place, relation, and office, as regards all the rest. The "body of Christ" was the only Church in existence among Christians. It was the one "organization,"—the one and only "denomination" anywhere. "Churches," or "assemblies," there might be, and were ; but these were no otherwise separate from each other, than by the necessity of space and distance. The "Church of God in Corinth" could not be locally present with the Church in Thessalonica or in Ephesus. But these were not different organizations, or denominations, or even "bodies." There was but the "one body" (Eph. iv. 4), even as there was but the "one Spirit ;"—a body God-made and not man-made,—where every one had his place, not of self-appointment, neither of human appointment, but of Divine.

Into this body, no men, or number of men, admitted,

or had power to admit. The members of it "received one another," just as, and because "Christ had received" (Rom. xv. 7). This was the condition of fellowship. They "received *one another*" upon that recognition of a mutual relationship towards each other, which Divine grace had brought them into. They dictated no terms upon which they would receive one another; they ordained for each other no code of religious law, no ritualistic service, to which all members of Christ were to subscribe or give adhesion. They were members of one family, bound in love and in duty to one another,—but with One only Master, even Christ, and all else, brethren.

This was the Church of God, as he made it,—the church, Christ's body. It was a body in practical, real, working order; not an invisible thing or a theory, which could be laid upon the shelf to make way for any more practicable invention of men's minds. There was no room for any other church. It claimed absolutely every one of the members of Christ. None was left free to join anything else according to his own taste or inclination; by the very fact that he was a Christian, he belonged of necessity to the "one body," the Church.

There were also means instituted for making known this oneness. The "assembly" *was* an assembly: they assembled themselves together; and not only for exhortation and edification, though surely for that; but they had a table also spread, around which they gathered, where the bread which they brake was not only "the communion of the body of Christ," the body given for them upon the Cross, but where they affirmed, that "we, being many, are one bread, one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread," (1 Cor. x. 17.)

But, you say, I shall find these members of the body of Christ scattered throughout the various denomina-



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tions of Christians ! It is too true ; and what has scattered them ? Judaism had done so ; and the Apostle John tells us that Christ died, that (among other things,) "He might *gather together in one*, the children of God which were scattered abroad," (John xi. 52). It is no use to say, therefore, that the real unity of Christians subsists still, and the multiplicity of denominations does not disturb it. It is no use, again, to speak of a unity of affection, of interests of hopes, &c., which abides still. However much that may be true, it was true also in the days of Judaism, as well as now ; yet, says the Word of God, the children of God were "scattered" then, and Christ died to gather them together. But, according to your own confession, they are "scattered" still.

And some, yea, many, openly approve of this, as if it were most manifestly superior to the Divine plan. Though few would be so bold as to attempt to show us that Paul or Peter established different denominations, or that Episcopalianism had its representation at Ephesus, Presbyterianism in Crete, and Congregationalism at Corinth ; yet they really speak as if it were an improvement now that these things should be. The "many men, many minds," can thus be accommodated. But what of God's mind ? Has He none ? And does Christianity, which legislates about a covered or uncovered head (1 Cor. xi.), leave men's minds to their own wanderings, or subject them to God's ? It is surely not hard to give the answer.

The Church of God exists. Thank God, it does. And it exists, "one body" still, not *many* bodies. Reader, if you be Christ's, I ask you to consider, with His word before you, is there any other religious body, which He owns as His, save this one Church we have been speaking of ? And then, what

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claim have other bodies, which do not even *represent* the Church of God, upon your or my obedience?

I merely state the principle now. I leave it to every "honest and good heart" to apply it for itself. Certainly, if the Church of God abides, and we belong to it, we have duties which spring necessarily out of that relationship. God's word too abides, the simple test and judge of all. May the coming Lord be able to say to you and me, reader, what He could say to the Church in Philadelphia: "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name" (Rev. iii. 8.)

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### KEY-NOTES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS links itself most evidently and closely with those to Timothy. It is more simply individual, not speaking of the state of the Church at large or prophesying of the latter days, but exhorting to the practical "godliness" which "the truth," held really in the soul, necessarily produced (i. 1). This connection is insisted on over and over again in this short epistle. To maintain this was the great object of the appointment of elders, mentioned as directly committed to Titus by the Apostle. The character of these (much more in question than any gift), must suit the office with which they were entrusted. Of this there was plain need: on the one hand there was the tendency of the natural disposition to break out; and on the other hand the error that suited it so well ready to come in.

The only effectual teacher of practical godliness is the grace that brings salvation to the soul and makes the

appearing of the glory of Christ its hope, the grace of a Saviour God who gave himself to redeem us (not from guilt and punishment merely, but) from all *iniquity*, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (ch. ii. 10-14.)

This is the *objective* side—the moral argument by which the soul is wrought upon, if I may so say. The *subjective* is, the actual communication of new life, and the power of the Spirit of God working in that life (ch. iii. 4-6.)

All this in the way of doctrinal exposition comes in by the way, interwoven into a practical exhortation to believers in their various relationships, not only to each other, but to men at large.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON I may speak of here. Its teaching, as I believe, is as to the way in which Christianity acts with regard to the social distinctions that obtain in the world. It does not abolish these by a law. It does not teach the brother of low degree to claim the abolition of them on his own behalf. Grace, while it really exalts, never teaches one to exalt himself, nor to make his Christianity a plea for the attainment of position in the world. It does not teach even a slave to claim on that account exemption from his master's yoke; but it teaches the master the joy of recognizing in a slave a "brother beloved," and of freely, voluntarily relinquishing "claim" upon his own side. The very simple principle applies to every disciple, high and low, rich and poor together: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Any one may trace the application of these principles in the Epistle to Philemon.

## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, (*Continued.*)

In each of the two chapters last before us there was "a feast of the Jews," which furnished a sort of keynote to the meaning of it. In ch. v. the sabbath, wherein God rested not, and man had no real rest. In ch. vi. the passover. Now in ch. vii. we have yet another, the "feast of tabernacles," the memorial of the tent-life in the wilderness by those who could look back from their triumphant enjoyment of the land of promise, to see the way by which the hand of the Lord had led them thither.

But alas, they had failed. That rich and pleasant land was under the heel of strangers. The yoke of bondage was upon their neck. If now they could keep the feast, it was but a "Jews' feast," not, as once, Jehovah's.

Yet they did go on with it. Under Divine displeasure, and in the midst of the ruin which sin had made, they could be merry without God and without care for Him, though manifested in their midst. Hence the Lord goes not up to the feast. As He says to His brethren, it was but the world enjoying its own, and before He could manifest Himself to it for blessing, both atonement must have been wrought, and also judgment break the pride and expose the condition of man. His hour was *not yet come*.

Nevertheless, after the feast has begun without Him, He goes up, but secretly ; not to sanction it by His presence, or share the merry-making there, but to call to Himself hearts conscious of their need amid all this pretension to abundance.

His presence is a complete exposure of the state of things. The moral reason for those words, " Mine hour is not yet come," is evident. All sorts of men and

minds are there. Curious speculators as to the mysterious knowledge of an uneducated man; ignorance that prided itself upon its wisdom; open and violent opposers; clear-headed men convinced in mind, perhaps never changed in heart; some more deeply-stricken by His words; some using the very truth itself with falsest application to escape their own convictions; the great men and religionists united as one man in unreasoning enmity and blind rejection of his claims: all this comes to the surface in the chapter before us. Amid all the confusion a Voice in distinct, direct challenge of the heart and conscience, convicts, exposes, yet invites. It is the Voice of One standing between God and man, from God to man, *for* God and yet for man. He who utters it has well-nigh done His errand and is going back from whence He came. For blessing the world His hour is not yet come. But there are already, nevertheless, "rivers of water in a dry place," and the thirsty are welcome. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

This is the doctrine of the 4th chapter, or little more. What He had said there to the Samaritan woman, He reaffirms here in the midst of Jerusalem. For there was no "living water" anywhere but in Himself; Judea was as dry ground as Samaria.

But the Lord's words do not end here. He adds as to him that should come and drink according to His invitation: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

He was leaving the world in unchanged evil, and therefore in unchanged misery. It had rejected Him in whom alone the springs of life and healing were to be found. Yet although thus the general condition of

things went on unaltered, testimony to Him and His grace was to be perpetuated in the world throughout the time of His absence. That testimony, the fulness of hearts filled so completely, so over-abundantly with the wondrous gift He spake of, that it should flow forth from them again, and out of the belly, the innermost part of man, in "rivers of living water." It is added, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given], because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The Spirit sent down, after the completion of atonement by the cross, and as a witness of the acceptance and glory of the One who had made it, would be the power of all this in the soul of the saint; and thus he would become the representative in the world of the absent Saviour; the confirmation of His words to the souls of others; in that he could, having come and drunk himself, and found abiding satisfaction, bear witness of where that fulness was that he had found.

And the feast of tabernacles waits for its fulfilment at His coming again. It is during the millennial day that Israel will keep it in full reality; when once again their wanderings shall have ended, and they shall be planted in their own land, never again to be cast out. There too, the nations of the earth will enter into it in measure also; for pilgrimage shall, to one and all, be a past condition (see Zech. xiv. 16.) Only its moral lesson shall remain. Its "humbling" and its "proving," its "hunger," and its manna-food, shall be the memorial of how, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, doth man live (Deut. viii. 2, 3.) A blessed result! for which it will be worth while to have known the pilgrimage.

## ANSWERS TO SPECIAL QUESTIONS.

(8.) If when the church is taken, there are to be in the kingdom only two classes, the tares and the wheat, how can I be watching for the Lord, so long as I see a third class still in existence?

*Ans.* There has been some misunderstanding of the passage in p. 242, to which reference is made. It might, no doubt, have been put more plainly. But what is said in the paper in question, is that in the parable taken up, it is "a simple question of good wheat for the granary, or of tares for the burning." That is evident. Then, that "all seem to have taken sides before the *close* of the time of harvest, either manifestly *for* Christ, or as manifestly against Him." It is not meant that before the Lord takes His people to Himself this last will be; but as in p. 244: "The true saints once taken out of (Christendom) . . . the rest of the professing body will be given over to become, as they speedily will become, from being unbelievers of the truth, believers of a lie." That is *after* the taking up of the Church, although this "taking sides" may have begun before. The language is not as clear as might be, but that is the meaning.

(9.) Are angels the instruments whereby the Church, at the coming of Christ, is brought to Him? The angels gather both tares and wheat; do they gather the Church, or is it the Lord Himself does so?

*Ans.* The angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14). I see no reason to doubt that their ministry extends on to the day of the saints' rapture. Precisely in what it may consist I do not know; but "the voice of the *archangel*," in 1 Thess. iv. 16, seems also to intimate some sort of angelic ministration,

## LIVING WATER.

Why not of that living fountain, Flowing from the heart of God, Should the thirsty sinner tasting Drink, and leave sin's heavy load ?	<i>John vii. 37.</i>  <i>Isaiah liii. 6.</i>
Rise, poor heart ! the fountain's open, Christ hath died upon the tree, All the powers of hell are shaken, Grace flows down from God to thee.	<i>Rev. xxi. 6.</i>
God Himself the Source, the Fountain, Christ the Way the waters flow, By the Spirit down from heaven, To the thirsty heart below.	<i>John iv. 10.</i>  <i>John iv. 14.</i>
Now's the time, the time accepted, Now to thee God's light hath shone, Christ God's love hath manifested, He the finished work hath done.	<i>2 Cor. vi. 2.</i> <i>2 Cor. iv. 4-6.</i> <i>2 Cor. v. 18-21</i>
By one righteousness completed, Adam's life receives its doom ; Jesus Christ, in glory seated, Everlasting life hath won.	<i>Rom. v. 18.</i> <i>Rom. vi. 6.</i> <i>Rom. v. 17, 18</i> <i>Rom. v. 21.</i>
Rise, poor heart ! the river's flowing, Haste ! delay not ! yet there's room ; Hear the Word of God beseeching, " Whosoever thirsts may come'."	<i>Rev. xxi. 6.</i> <i>Luk xiv. 22-23</i>  <i>Rev. xxii. 17.</i>

A. P. C.



## A HOLY DAY TO THE LORD.

NEH. viii. 8-12.

"So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest, the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God, MOURN NOT, NOR WEEP. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy, neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way, to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."

How sweetly, yet rebukingly, does this lesson come to us from the pages of the Old Testament. It is not the "gospel," and yet how much gospel is there in it too, which it would be well if we of a brighter and happier day had fully learnt.

The "gospel" is "good news:" or, good news "of God" (Rom. i. 1); that which comes to us from the heart of the Good and Blessed God, as the witness of what He delights in. It is the preaching of gladness; and what is the reception of it unto the soul but the reception of gladness? News there is from Him, of such a nature and character that the mere believing listening to it is the one and effectual remedy for all the care and sorrow which oppress us naturally, and are our heritage indeed as children of men. Reader, have you apprehended that? And good news, let me add, which God publishes for his own joy and glory, so that we may know and understand *Him* in the message he has sent.

Well He knows, moreover, the people among whom He publishes this good news. It is just because they are what they are, His gospel becomes so sweet a declaration of what He is. And He bids it to be preached to

every one of them in all the world, and makes it simple obedience, the *first point of duty* to Himself, to "*obey the gospel*" with the "*obedience of faith*." In other words, to believe and to rejoice!

This is the blessedness of this scene in Israel in the time of Nehemiah. Good cause had they, if any ever had, to weep "when they heard the words of the law." They might claim, if any, amid the ruins of their broken city, and listening to the thunders of that terrible law, which, through their breach of it, had brought in such desolation, that they did well to weep. Would it have been anything but hardness of heart on their part to have refused their tears to the misery of their condition, and the sin against their God which had introduced the misery?

Yet one voice had title to be heard surely even there. If He, against whom they had sinned, spoke, surely they were to listen. If He, even now, could preach gladness to them, surely they were to be glad! and glad the more in Him who could make their sin and misery the suited time to display His goodness and His grace. It was not "joy" simply they were called to: it was "*the joy of the Lord*." If it were hardness in the first instance then, not to feel their sin and misery, would it not be greater hardness not to feel His grace now and to rejoice in Him?

And this is what God is calling men to universally, beloved reader, by that gospel which he has sent out every where, to be preached to "every creature under heaven." He is bearing witness to Himself. Has He not title to be heard and to be believed? If He call to "*obedience of faith*" in this good news, is it humble or good to go on mourning as if He had not spoken? Is it good or wise *not* to be confident in the love He has in His heart toward us?

And what a precious thought is this of a holy day kept to the Lord, excluding sorrow, of necessity, as profanation of its holiness! Is it not the very echo of that thought of the apostle: "Now, the very God of *peace* sanctify you wholly"? or, of that word which assures us that among the foremost "fruits of the Spirit" are "joy" and "peace"?

Dear fellow-believer in the Lord Jesus, will you let me say to you, in the presence of these blessed scriptures, that *unhappiness* is *unholiness*? that "the joy of the Lord" is alone your "strength," whether for walk or service?

You may ask me, "Do you know who I am? Do you know my failures, my sins, my backslidings, the dishonour I have done to the name of Jesus?" I reply, I am sure you will do nothing but still dishonour it, if you refuse God's way of help against such dishonour. "God is for us," beloved. Is that because we are for Him, or because of what Jesus is in His presence for us? Could we be nearer to Him by any effort or right-living of our own, than we are at this moment as "accepted in the Beloved"? This acceptance, this favour, this delight of God in His own Son, rests upon us spite of all we are. To know it, believe it, enter into it, live in it, is restoration, blessing, power for the soul.

You say, "My feet are defiled; how can I walk with God?" I ask again, know you not who it is, who, having come from God, and, going back to God, stooped in the full consciousness of that, to wash the feet of His own, that they might have "part with Him"? Was that cleansing *their* work then, or His? Was He at a distance from them when He did it, or near at hand? Did the uncleanness of their feet do aught but make Him serve them in more lowly fashion? If you would be clean now, you must sit still now and let Him serve you.

"Washing of water" is "by the word." You must sit, and listen, and believe. And as he puts before you all the greatness and fulness of His love, and all that love has done for security of blessing to you, you will hear him say, "Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you."

That which no law, no ordinance, no striving will effect for you, a few moments in His presence will accomplish. You will learn that "there is *mercy* with Him, that He may be feared;" and that "in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Yea, "the very God of peace" shall "sanctify you wholly."

And, reader, you who have never yet tasted of this love of His, let me assure you "to you" also "is the word of this salvation sent." There is "gospel" for you: the superscription of my message is, "to every creature." To you, surrounded with as sad evidences of your guilt as ever had Israel, the word of God's grace is still, "believe the *gospel*," "obey the *gospel*." It is the "God of peace" sanctifies. It is "the grace of God which bringeth salvation unto all men," which teaches us and *alone* "teaches us, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."

Therefore, to you, as you are, is "the gospel of salvation" preached. You can be nothing, do nothing, save as *it* teaches you, even the "grace that bringeth salvation." Will you listen to it? Will you believe it? For, as surely as Christ "died for *sinners*," that death of His is God's great treasury of blessing for all such. Every cheque upon this must be signed with that name, that one name of "SINNER," which proves your title to the wealth laid up there.

To you, then, a holy day to the Lord is proclaimed: "an accepted time, a day of salvation." God, against

whom your sins have been, who alone has title to come in with a message of joy into the midst of the ruin and misery of the fall, has come in with the "good news" of "peace" made by the blood of the cross of Jesus, and preached to every creature for the obedience of faith. To believe and obey *that* gospel is to listen to and rejoice in what He is declaring to us.

Reader, will you be as those of whom it is written here: "And all the people went their way, to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, *because* they had UNDERSTOOD the words that were declared unto them."

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## OUR FAILURE AND ITS REMEDY.

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There are few things in which Satan takes so much advantage of us as in using our failures to keep us from God. The power that he gets over God's people in this way is wonderful; and how many cases are there that one meets with in which there is no real restoration to communion with God, whilst there is apparent and perhaps real sorrow for failure? How many, too, would have to say, if the truth were spoken out, that whilst the language of nearness is used, and that perhaps in an exaggerated way, in order to cover up to ourselves and others the real state of things, yet there is no conscious nearness in the heart to God all the while. It is this leaves us so often under the power of the things and circumstances through which we pass. For if away from Him what strength have we? Our struggles and efforts to maintain ourselves in a path that is suited to our place before God must fail. There is no strength in which we can stand before Satan and escape his wiles, but the

power of the Spirit of God ; and no path in which we can find that strength available for us, but that of communion with and consequent obedience to Him. Want of confidence in God lies at the root of all this. It was by listening to the suggestion of a doubt as to God's love that sin came in and gained power over man. It is by that confidence being restored that sin is triumphed over. The Lord Jesus is the Restorer of that confidence, and that by showing to us that, sinners as we are, He loves us, and we may trust Him fully. What blessedness is this for man ! All that he could look for from God was judgment ; but he finds mercy. God's triumph over sin is not alone in judging it, but by displaying grace towards those who are involved in it. How full the heart is of praise when that love He has shewn us is believed, and how precious does that One become to us. How sweet too to the Father is the melody that rises in the heart of one who, poor and weak and unfit in himself, has tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Now it is through our sins and failures that He teaches us what He is to us, and that we cannot do without Him one moment. Oh ! say some, then we may continue in sin, that grace may abound. He who has never known what God is or grace either, may speak thus, but not the Christian. He has a nature that links him with God and makes him delight in holiness and long for deliverance, not alone from guilt and judgment, but from the power of sin, and therefore says, God forbid. But when conscience is awake and the heart exercised to desire right ways, there still is so often manifested the weakness and sinfulness of human nature, that the enemy takes advantage of this to dim the sense of God's love in our souls.

Supposing I have learned what Christ is to me as a Saviour. Being justified by faith I have peace with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Still I may know but little how to measure and avail myself of the grace that I have been called to enjoy. The very fact of having an exercised conscience and heart, makes me regard my ways and words with jealousy, lest I should offend or grieve Him, and the danger is of letting the legalism so natural to the human heart lay hold of me. Its claims to be heard are very plausible. It takes the side of righteousness and appeals to the very desire after holiness that divine grace has implanted in the child of God. It does not come *as law* and invite me to take up with it. I should not listen if it did. But it speaks to my conscience and bids me do what I ought to do as a Christian, and perhaps the poor deceived heart seeking power over sin, turns away from God, to find that *the strength* of sin is the law, and instead of the deliverance that is promised finds all real ability to walk with God is lost, and the sense of grace growing weaker and weaker as the struggle goes on. No intelligence of truth can shield one from this, though it may deepen the conviction of the conscience and intensify the distress of soul. And here is the danger of getting the mind full of abstractions. Truth is light and will do its work in spite of us, but if my knowledge of grace does not in some measure correspond, what distress is it to know as a truth that I am in Canaan in heavenly places in Christ, and yet in spirit I may be hardly out of Egypt. Is not this a day of special danger in this respect to all of us?

The inconsistency between profession and practice is a burden and weight upon many a heart. How wise and gracious of our blessed Master, "He spake to them as they were able to bear it." If I am a baby, better to own that I am and seek the food that suits that state. As such I may sit down to a meal for a full grown man and become morally a dyspeptic of the worst kind, and

almost loathe the food that I cannot enjoy, but which distresses me. Conscience will say, you ought to be walking as one who is seated in the heavenlies and looking down upon all on earth. The sad answer I may have to give is perhaps, I know it well, but, alas ! I am not. How deep and wide-spread is this evil in our day ! What a moral wreck is it bringing many to ! “ Holding faith and a *good conscience*, which some having put away, concerning *faith* have made shipwreck,” says the Apostle.

But what security is there for all this ? Is there no relief from such a state ? Does he abandon to hardness of heart those whom the Father has given to him out of the world, although saving them from the everlasting consequences of their ways ? Such thoughts will rise sometimes, but they only show how little grace is realized, when law is taken up with. Did we love Him before He loved us ? or is it just the other way ? Was it for any good He saw in us He left His glory for a servant's place and the cross and dust of death with all its shame ? Or was it just the outflow of the love of God towards us when we were yet sinners that He came to witness to ? Surely it was that alone. Then it was no motive outside himself all this display of grace and goodness sprang from. He loves because He is love, and though He found a fitting scene for the display of it in an evil world, yet all is from Himself ; and as to us He seeks to make us all we ought to be. And this is just the key to all our trouble, we forget Him. Our proud natures do not like to be indebted to Him for everything. We may have taken the moulding of ourselves into our own hands and out of His and it has all failed. Mercy to us indeed that it should be so.

It is just this then, that we need to have Him before us, to meditate upon His love to us, believing all that we may have learned, it may be in an intellectual way, and



careful not to undervalue that. But setting the blessed God before us always. Silencing the demands of the law the "ought" and "must" with the confession of our helplessness, and thus practically dying to it, but meditating on His love—love that whilst we know it, passes knowledge, tracing His ways of goodness towards us as His word records them, till the deep reality of it all breaks in upon our souls, and in the living light of what He is, we "*joy in God* through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the reconciliation." Fit food this is for babes, young men and fathers too! The dull, dry study of doctrine may choke and starve our souls, but with Christ to feed upon we learn the blessedness of those words, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Thus, and only thus can the deep, quiet judgment of ourselves go on day by day, and whilst we stop to drink, as drink we must, the bitter waters of Marah, we shall find the wood of the tree to sweeten them. To try the crucifixion of the flesh in our own strength is cruel work, and gladly would we be spared, but if Christ and His cross are before us we can glory in it, as that by which we are crucified to the world and the world to us.

R. T. G.

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"HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF SHALL BE  
EXALTED."

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It is instructive and interesting to trace through Scripture how the Lord leads His servants from scenes and positions of natural servitude and subjugation to power and dignity, moral or natural. The first man who arose practically as God's witness on earth, (not only to the

world as Enoch) must build an ark for the saving of his house, amid the scoffs and reproaches of the whole unbelieving world. He must toil and fulfil his work, and from the demands of it there could be no escape; he must submit himself cheerfully to those demands, or the service imperatively enjoined, and one which he himself felt as incontrovertibly necessary, would be in a tenfold degree more onerous. For if the mind disapproves of the demand to which it must submit, the submission must be inconceivably more difficult, and the suffering greatly augmented.

Noah laboured in faith, and though the period of his humiliating work was more than one hundred years, yet he laboured and felt he must,—not that he liked the place of suffering, but he believed that the end would compensate for the interval. Now the great cause of suffering in any child of God is not from the place of subjection he is set in, but from the repugnance of his mind to submit himself to it. Noah had the secret, he felt the servitude was necessary, and that the end would be his reward. It is the lack of this faith which makes the path of many a one painfully arduous, and one of bitter suffering . . . God sees no other path would suit, and He in His love is inflexible in nurturing up His own, so that the end may vindicate and justify His counsel. This reluctance to submit and with faith to one's ordained position here is to be found in every station of life,—the parent of all discontent, the fruition of the fall, and therefore the real sting and sorrow in the duty.

Abraham's history teaches us the same truth: Required to be a stranger in a strange land, he ever found that unqualified submission to what was enjoined was the path of safety; if he became reluctant, or discontented with the yoke, he suffered more, as his going down to Egypt taught him. He learned, and by faith too, to

cease from all endeavours to extricate himself from the humbling position of strangership, for he could not be walking in faith, yielding himself to the humbling path enjoined with the acquiescence of a convinced judgment (which faith confers), if he were.

The want of this faith was the cause of Lot's apostacy, and forfeiture of the blessing which crowns one really subject to the will of God. He sought to extricate himself, and alas ! how many do, and the end with them is that they lose the very thing which has seduced them from the path of subjection, and in the end they have lost on both sides ; they have lost the ideal which induced them to forsake the path of self-denying subjection.

We are warned of the same in Jacob's history. When he turned aside to Shalem and forgot for a moment his pilgrim character, what sorrow and trial awaited him ! On the other hand we learn from Joseph how faithful righteous submission to the will of God, not seeking to evade nor (as often Christians in common service are) careless in the discharge of the duties of it, ensured in the end such honour and blessing. I might cite Moses and many more, but I have adduced examples enough to prove that God tests the quality of every one of His own by their ability to walk in humble subjection to a path which in itself is dreary, but ends in distinct and perfect blessing and satisfaction.

Perhaps it would be admitted, if the path is clearly prescribed of God, as Noah's and Abraham's, then the point I press is simple and distinct enough, but if I have plunged myself, by my own impatience and carnality, into circumstances of trial, may I not seek to extricate myself from them ? The answer to this depends entirely on the nature of the circumstances. If I can be made free, use it rather, is God's principle to every bondsman ;

but the freedom must be divinely obtained, or it is only a repetition of the impatience of the flesh. The children of Israel ought to have gone direct from the wilderness to Canaan, but distrusting the arm of the Lord, they in their hearts turned back into Egypt; consequently they are excluded from that land, and hence if they attempt to extricate themselves from the sentence of passing their lives in the wilderness, they only meet with defeat and disgrace. Their place and duty is to submit and acknowledge the justness of the sentence. While Caleb and Joshua who suffer in a similar way, but not for the same reason, learn in humble subjection to wait for a brighter day, and because they submit, according to God's mind, to find that they were no older after 40 years submission, then they were before it.

A wondrous instance of grace, that if we submit in faith unto God's counsel, though humbling and trying for a moment, yet the length or severity of the suffering shall in no wise impair our energy for active service by and bye when the term of discipline is over.

Again we find another form in which this truth is established. In the instances we have been considering, Israel, through unbelief and fear, disqualified themselves for the blessings of Canaan, but on the occasion of their captivity into Babylon, however severe and galling bodily and religiously that captivity was, they were to use no means to extricate themselves from it. In their carnality they had first sought Babylon, that is in their natural tastes they were attracted to it, and now that they are led captive by it and find themselves under its iron heel, their (see Jer. 29) present blessing and happiness depend on their resigned and contented submission to their lot. Here their carnality led them, but they must learn now in captivity, not in natural equal intercourse, the fruition of what mere nature would lead to; and in the oath

which Zedekiah swore to the king of Babylon, we learn the bondage that the overpowered one submits to from the one who has conquered in nature. And this oath, it was not righteous or admissible, for Zedekiah to break (see Ezek. 17), nay in his attempting to break it, and by the king of Egypt, he only entailed on himself the wrath and judgment of God. (See Ezek. xvii. 19, 20.)

J. E. S.

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## THE KINGDOM OF THE ABSENT KING.

### (6.) THE DIVINE COUNSEL AND PURPOSE.

The three parables which remain to be considered have found interpretations more various and conflicting than the preceding ones, and require therefore an examination proportionately the more careful. The former were all spoken (with the exception of the interpretation of the second one) in the presence of the whole multitude, and they refer to a condition of things to which the world at large is this day witness. But "then," we read, these four parables having been delivered,—“Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house, and His disciples came unto Him” (ver. 36). To these alone He speaks the parables which follow, for they contain not external history merely, but the Divine mind surely fulfilling amid all this outward confusion and ruin, which the former parables have shown Him not ignorant of who foretold it from the beginning.\*

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\* The very number of the parables tells of this. For as there are seven in all, the number from creation onwards the type and symbol of completeness,—so this number seven is divided further into *four* and *three*. “Four” is the number of universality, of the world at large, from the four points of the compass, (as I take it) east, west, north and south. “Three” is the Divine number, that of the Persons in the Godhead. Here then the first four parables give us the world aspect of the kingdom of heaven; the last three the Divine mind accomplishing with regard to it.

It will not be necessary to advert to different views prevailing as to the meaning of the parables before us, but only to seek to show from Scripture itself, as fully as possible, the grounds for that which will here be considered as the true.

The first two parables we shall put together, as they invite comparison by their evident resemblance to one another:—

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (vers. 44-46).

The parables are alike in this, that they both present to us the action of a man who purchases what has value in his eyes at the cost of all he has. The question is, who is presented here? The common voice replies that it is man as the seeker of salvation or of Christ,—that we have here the story of individual effort after the “one thing needful,” flinging aside all other things in order to obtain it. But is this consistent with the constant representations of Scripture, or with the facts themselves? Do we thus buy Christ at the cost of all we have? It is true we have in the prophet the exhortation to “buy” (Isa. iv. 1), where the “wine and milk” are no doubt the figure of spiritual sustenance. But there (that there may be no mistake in such a matter), the “buying” is distinctly said to be “*without money and without price.*” Man is never represented as seeking salvation with wealth in his hand to purchase it. The prodigal seeks, but not until perishing with hunger. He comes back beggared, driven by necessity, and only

so. And all who have ever come back really to the Father, know this to be the truthful representation of the matter.

On the other hand the real Seeker, Finder, Buyer, everywhere in Scripture, is the Lord Jesus Christ. The figure in both parables is most evidently His. The same Person is represented in each, and the same work too, though under different aspects.

In the first parable, it is treasure hid in a field that is the object of the Buyer. "The field," we are told in the interpretation of the parable of the tares, "is the world." It is an object in the *world* then,—an earthly object,—that is sought for and obtained. So, in this parable, He is represented as buying "that field"—buying the world. He buys the field to get the treasure in it. Most certainly no man ever bought the world to get Christ, so that the believer is not the "man" represented in the parable.

Did Christ, then, buy the world by His sufferings? Turn to the last chapter of this gospel, and hear Him say, as risen from the dead, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth." Strictly it is "authority," not "power." He has title over all, and that as the Risen One. "Ask of Me," is the language of Jehovah to the Son begotten upon earth, "and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. ii). Thus He takes the throne in the day of His appearing and His kingdom. It is because of that wondrous descent of One "in the form of God" down to the fathomless depths of "the death of the Cross," that "*therefore* hath God highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue

should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii). It is that explains, what perplexes some, that Peter can speak of those who, "denying the Lord that *bought* them, bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet ii. 1). These are not at all *redeemed* ones, but they *are* "bought," for all men and all the world belong to Him as the fruit of His sufferings,—of that Cross, where He, for the sake of that which had beauty in His eyes, sold all that He had.

Thus I conceive it unquestionable, that it is Christ Himself who is the central figure in these two parables. We may now compare the two sides of His work presented in them. In that of the treasure we have seen it is the field of the "world" that is bought for the sake of the treasure in it; while in that of the pearl, no field is bought at all, but simply the pearl itself. Are these two figures, then, the treasure and the pearl, different aspects of the same thing, or different things? the same object from different points of view; or different objects?

If we look for a moment at what has been already pointed out as to "the kingdom of heaven" of which these parables are both similitudes, we shall see that there are two spheres which it embraces, answering to those words of the Lord we have just quoted, "All authority is given unto Me in *heaven* and in *earth*." Christ is now, as a matter of fact, gathering out from the earth those who are to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven"—not in earthly, but in heavenly blessing. But before "the *Appearing* and kingdom," this purpose having been accomplished and the heavenly saints caught up to meet the Lord,—He will gather to Himself for blessing upon the earth a remnant of Israel and an election of the Gen-



tiles. Take the two purposes of Christ's death, as expressed in John xi. 51, 52, you have it as the inspired comment upon Caiaphas' advice to the Jewish council: "And this spake he, not of himself, but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for *that nation*. And not for that nation only, adds the inspired writer, "but that *also* He should gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad." Now I ask, is it not significant that we find in the second of these parables the very type of **UNITY**,—the *one* pearl,—as that which the merchant man bought? Is it not then permissible and natural, to turn to the other, with the anticipation of finding in it "that nation" of Israel, for which also Jesus died, under the figure of the "treasure hid in the field"?

Thus would Israel on the one hand, and the Church upon the other, be the representatives of earthly and of heavenly blessing: the Gentile nations coming in to share with Israel the one, as the departed saints of the past dispensations come in to share with the Church the other. The reason why these two alone should be spoken of, and not along with the Church the saints of former times, or along with Israel the Gentiles of the future, will I think be plain to those who consider the Scripture mode of putting these same things. Thus to Israel belong the "promises" as Rom. ix. 4 declares. The Gentiles no more come into view there, than they do in the parable of the treasure here. Yet many a Scripture promises the blessing of the Gentiles on a future day. But they come in under the skirts of the now despised Jew (Zech. viii. 23). Then again, as to the Church, it is the only company of people gathered openly and avowedly for heavenly blessing. And moreover, it is the company that is being gathered *now*, and began to be with the sowing of the gospel-seed in the first parable of those before us.

Let us look now somewhat closer into the details of the parable of the treasure hid in a field.

Of old it had been said, "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for his peculiar *treasure*." (Ps. cxxxv. 4.) But at the time when ~~He~~ who had so chosen them came unto his own, there was ~~but~~ little appearance in the condition of the people of the place they had thus in Jehovah's heart. "Lo-Ammi," "not my people," had long been said of them. They were even then scattered among the Gentiles. The figure of the treasure hid in the field was the true similitude of their condition, watched over as "beloved for the fathers' sake," and yet trodden down by the foot of the oppressor, to none but Him who yet longed over them known as having preciousness for God.

But there was one who recognized the value of this treasure. One who had in His birth fulfilled to Israel Isaiah's prophecy of Emmanuel, "God with us." One to whom, so born, Gentiles had brought their homage as "King of the Jews." He found this treasure, presenting Himself among them as one having Divine power to meet their condition, and bring them forth out of their hiding place, and make manifest the object of Divine favour and delight. And those who knew best His thoughts were ever expecting the time when He would bring forth this treasure and display it openly. That question which they had proposed to Him after His resurrection shews what had long been in their hearts, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

And they understood not when they saw the gleam of brightness which had shone out for them when He rode in the meekest of triumphs, amidst the acclamations of the multitude, into Jerusalem, fade and die out in the mid-day darkness which so shortly after fell on Calvary.

They understood not yet how He was in all this but the "man" in His own parable, who, finding treasure in the field, *hideth it*, and for joy thereof goeth forth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

*And the treasure is hidden still.* Calvary is come and gone—Joseph's new tomb is emptied of its guest—they have stood upon the Mount called Olivet, and seen Him whom they have owned King of the Jews go up to take another throne than that of David. Then they are found charging the people with their denial of the Holy One and the Just, bidding them still repent and be converted, and even now He who had left them would be sent back to them, and the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord. Scenes before the council follow; one at last in which a man, whose face shines with the glory of heaven, stands and charges the leaders of the nation with the accumulated guilt of ages: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do alway resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." And they cast him out of the city and stone him. Those that were bidden have been called to the marriage, and they will not come.

The city is destroyed, and the people scattered. Israel are still a treasure hid. The parable gives no bringing forth. Simply the field is bought. It is now but "Ask and I will give thee." All waits upon the will of Him to whom now everything belongs.

But *He* waits, and has waited for eighteen centuries, as if the treasure were nothing to Him now, and He had forgotten his purpose.

Then the second parable comes in as what is needed by way of explanation of the long delay. The "one pearl of great price" speaks of the preciousness to Him of another object upon which he has set his heart. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it"—

“went and sold all that He had and bought it.” Not now the field of the world, for the Church is heavenly. Israel has still the earthly “promises.” We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly* places in Christ Jesus.

This Church is *one*—one pearl. Brought up out of the depth of the sea, and taken out of the rough shell in which it is first encased—taken out at the cost of the life of that to which it owes its being—the pearl is a fitting type of that which has been drawn out of the sea of Gentile waters, and out of the roughness of its natural condition, at the cost of the life of Him in whom it was seen and chosen before the foundation of the world. Of how “great price” to Him, that death of His may witness. The title which the Christian heart so commonly and naturally takes to be His alone, it is sweet to see that *His* heart can give His people. We, dear fellow believers, are His precious pearl. Nor is there any “hiding again” here, or suspension of this purpose. This is the second meaning of the Cross, “who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

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## A PRINCIPLE FOR EVIL DAYS.

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JER. xv. 19.

“Therefore, thus saith the Lord. . . . If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth.”

It was in the midst of the wreck and ruin of Israel, that these words were uttered. They convey to us most important and needed instruction for days of very similar character. The student of the Word of God should not surely be ignorant that the “last days” of christianity are the “perilous” and not the prosperous “times.”

(2 Tim. iii. 1). And any one who will look at the description which follows in the passage referred to, may easily see that in very deed in such like times we are.

The word to Jeremiah, then, may well be much in our hearts in the present day. "Precious" and "vile" are mingled in strange sort around us. We are in a field where tares and wheat are growing up together unto the harvest, and where on every side manifest confusion prevails. To accept things in the mass as of God is utterly impossible. To reject them in the mass is equally impossible. Hence, where there is the least earnestness and energy of christian life, godly discrimination has of necessity to be used, and the principle seems indeed of the simplest and most self-evident sort, that the "precious" *must* be taken from the "vile."

But what *is* precious, and what *is* vile? Clearly the words imply some certain knowledge. It is not the mere exercise of any so-called right of "private judgment" that is in question. God, speaking by His Word to us, "he that is of God heareth God's words" (Jno. viii. 47). This is the only safe and healthful principle. To suppose that God could teach two opposite things as truth would be to dishonour Him. To suppose that He who has given His word would leave a really honest soul in doubt as to what He has spoken would be equally so. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

There is a sad lack among us of proper *Christian* conscience. Conscience, I mean, which holds for right and wrong, not what would be so merely according to the standard of things obtaining among those with whom we have grown up, but what the Word, simply and meekly listened to, declares as such. Without this, however, it is absolutely impossible to know what in God's sight *is* precious, and what *is* vile.

But there another danger besets us. For in this judgment of things around, if we are not very much before God, the search is very apt to become an occupation with and even search for evil instead of a gracious desire and search after good. A hard and critical spirit is engendered. Harsh and perverted judgment is formed in consequence; and not only do we become incapable of real critical discernment, but the whole tone and temper of the soul is deteriorated.

The Lord's words to Jeremiah intimate a very different employment and a very different spirit. *Not* toleration of evil. The "vile" is recognized and judged as vile; but the "precious" is what the heart is set upon. And it is not only frankly owned as there, wherever and in whatever association it may be found, but as that which is dear to God, its rescue is sought from the defilement with what is corrupt and evil.

And do not the words, "if thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile," seem to imply that, with the effort, there will be, at least, some very happy success in this direction? The soul occupied with evil soon fails to discern what is really such, and still more, perhaps, loses power to separate the good and evil. The soul occupied with and delighting in what is good, learns to detect evil readily because it knows what is good; but beside that it has the secret of power to separate as well as to discern.

Oh, for this ability to be as "God's mouth" among men! His who, if He speak, cannot speak in levity, nor yet in harshness; cannot tolerate evil, but aims to win from it and not to judge for it. Where are we, beloved brethren, as to this? Do we know how to be jealous for God's truth, yet manifesters of God's love? Do we know how to walk in a narrow path with a heart that knows no narrowness? Do we know that "love,"

which, as an apostle puts it, "thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth"?

The Lord give us more of a Jeremiah's spirit, and more of what was Jeremiah's blessed privilege in a day of abounding iniquity.

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## SCRIPTURE OUTLINES.

### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN. (*Continued*).

The eighth chapter raises a different question from any of the preceding ones. It is the question of the soul's ability to endure the presence of God Himself—the unveiled, awful Presence, which, throughout the dispensation of law, had been hidden behind the veil of the holiest. The testimony had been all through, "No man can see me and live," for "the way into the holiest was not made manifest" under "the ministration of death" and "of condemnation."

But now, if historically the veil was yet unrent, there was yet in their midst, the manifestation of that invisible God. "God is light," and there was He who could and did claim to be "the Light of the World" unveiled (ver. 12). Yet thunder and flame of Sinai there was none; and forgetting these were but envelopes of Deity, not Deity itself, the men of law, ignorant of His true glory, sought to disprove His claim by the very fact. The open convicted sinner that they brought was already under the righteous sentence of Moses' law. Would he confirm it, this man of whom they witnessed, "He receiveth sinners"? Or would he disallow it, and condemn himself by conflict with its authoritative decision?

It was a momentous question. To us who know well the infinite glory of the One they challenged, a question more momentous than they could conceive. For what if

the holiness of the God of Sinai were at variance with the love of the Incarnate as to this matter? What if grace were not just so absolutely free as it might seem in Him whose assurance was, "Whoso cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out"?

They meant to test all this, however; and for their purpose who so suited as this woman of shameful and unquestioned crime? So they set her in the midst and say unto Him, "Master, Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou?"

And "Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote upon the ground." He was not at issue with Moses' law. But "when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself and said unto them, 'He that is without sin among you let him cast the first stone at her.' And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground."

Thus it was no abstract question of law at all, but a very simple and solemn one as to in whose hands it lay to judge. Dared they appeal to the God of judgment, who if He judged would respect no man's person, but deal equally and unsparingly with all alike? Would Sinai suit them better than their fathers? A home-thrust it was for these respectable religionists. The light indeed was there, and they felt it; but conscience-work with them, as with so many, only drove them away from the exposure of the light: "Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."

Then in a few words she learns, and from Himself, that if men *could* not condemn, *He would* not. I do not say that this was to be the eternal result. Did she learn in her soul the grace that so expressed itself to her, that would no doubt be so. But we have seen already, in the fifth chapter of this gospel, that that which was in itself far less deep in character, might be taken as the fitting occasion for the utterance of the weightiest truths.



Here the principle is plain, and the application easy. In the presence of God, and in our sins, to find Him refusing the character of Judge,—“God in Christ, reconciling to Himself, not imputing” our “trespasses,” is to learn that freedom which the Lord goes on to speak of as gotten through the knowledge of the truth (ver. 32). Outside of that there was no freedom. “The servant,”—and Moses’ law gave no higher place to any than that of bond-service (Gal. iv. 1-7),—had not the freedom of God’s house, might be turned off at any time. If he did not give satisfaction to his lord—and who gave that to God according to the requirement of the law?—he abode not in the house. This was the real footing upon which all stood according to it. And the Lord connects this condition of bondage in the most unmistakeable way with the service of *sin*: “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin; and the servant abideth not in the house for ever.” To be in the presence of God without a veil, as those given a place there by one who had authority (“if the *Son* shall make you free”),—to find God absolutely for us in His love, and righteously for us too, is what alone loosens the yoke and breaks the bondage of sin. From that blessed knowledge of God Moses’ law excluded. None could see Him and live. The grace of Christ has brought us into His presence to know Him as a Father, that the heart being set right with Him, the feet might run joyfully in His ways.

In a blessed way, therefore, for us, He does bear witness of Himself in this chapter: first, as the “Light of the world” (12), then, “the Son” (35), then absolutely Jehovah (58). As the first He had manifested Himself in the case of the adulteress; as the second, He had authority to set the soul in the presence of God at liberty by the truth; thirdly, it was One no less or lower than God Himself who did so.

Alas, this display of glory woke up nought in those around but opposition to it. The blessed manifestation of grace in Him found no answer in those who had no conscious need of grace. Yet the Father had also given confirming witness to that which was of such infinite import to their souls (18), for if they believed not on Him they would die in their sins (24).

Yet they *would* reject; would lift up the Son of man (28). Then it would be seen how truly the Father was with Him in all He did, when the blessed work of the cross should reveal how alone God could have sinners in His presence, and the amazing sacrifice which He could make to have them there.

Thus the truth would make His disciples free. They would have the freedom of God's house given them by Him who had double title, as Son of God, and as the lifted up Son of man (31-36).

Judaism had thus passed away. Its shadows had gone, and the reality of things was being made manifest by that which thus was taking its place. The light exposed man's true condition. How could being Abraham's carnal seed cover over the actual reality of hearts and deeds most unlike Abraham's? And if they pleaded God's fatherhood to Israel (41), God was bringing out and manifesting His true sons. Were they such who knew not the voice of the Father when He spoke, and recognized not the Son of the Father, when He stood amongst them (42-47)?

The blessed declaration follows, which we are to have enlarged on by-and-bye, that in the pathway of His disciples, death does not lie (51). At that they cry out, not knowing the deep significance of His words, Abraham was dead and the prophets, was He greater than these? He answers that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, that he saw it and was glad. They, referring it to

His human life, ask Him, has He seen Abraham? To which He answers with one of His own solemn affirmations, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM."

Thus the full glory of His Godhead is declared, and all the wealth of blessedness which that revelation brings with it is made good to us. "God in Christ." "Light;" but "Love." Revealing; "not imputing." Son of God, conferring the freedom of the Father's house. Son of man, lifted up, that Divine love might have its way.

They may take up stones to stone Him; they shall not evoke one flash of the old Sinai flame. He had said, "I judge no man." Simply veiling once more that glory, and leaving the house which had been its old abode, "going through the midst of them" in Divine supremacy above their malice, He "so passed by."

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#### NOT KNOWING.

I know not what shall befall me,  
 God hangs a mist o'er my eyes;  
 And so, each step in my onward path,  
 He makes new scenes to rise,  
 And every joy He sends me, comes  
 As a strange and sweet surprise.

I see not a step before me,  
 As I tread on another year;  
 But the past is still in God's keeping—  
 The future His mercy shall clear,  
 And what looks dark in the distance,  
 May brighten as I draw near.

For perhaps the dreaded future  
 Has less bitter than I think;  
 The Lord may sweeten the waters,  
 Before I stoop to drink;

Or, if Marah must be Marah,  
He will stand beside the brink.

It may be, he has waiting  
For the coming of my feet,  
Some gift of such rare blessedness,  
Some joy so strangely sweet,  
That my lips shall only tremble  
With the thanks they cannot speak.

Oh ! restful, blessing ignorance !  
'Tis blessed not to know !  
It keeps me so still in those arms  
Which will not let me go,  
And hushes my soul to rest  
On the bosom that loves me so.

So I go on, not knowing,  
I would not if I might !  
I would rather walk in the dark with God,  
Than walk alone in the light—  
I would rather walk with Him by faith  
Than walk alone by sight.

My heart shrinks back from trials  
That the future may disclose,  
Yet I never had a sorrow  
But what the dear Lord chose—  
So I send the coming tears back  
With the whispered words, "He knows."

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### PEACE.

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Fierce was the wild billow ; dark was the night ;  
Oars laboured heavily ; foam glimmered white ;  
Mariners trembled ; peril was nigh ;  
Then said the God of might, " Peace, it is I !"

Ridge of the mountain wave, lower thy crest !  
Wail of Euroclydon, be thou at rest !  
Peril can none be, sorrow must fly,  
Where saith the Light of light, " Peace, it is I !"

## EXPELLED FROM EDEN, RECEIVED INTO PARADISE.

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There were two thieves. One was driven out of the earthly paradise for stealing—the other was received into the heavenly paradise in spite of his stealing.

In the expulsion of the one, we have the display of the government of God and His judgment, so far, of sin. In the reception of the other, we see the grace of God toward the sinner.

I need not say that Adam was the former, nor that he who is known to us as the “dying thief” is the latter.

I do not pronounce on Adam’s eternal state. There are grounds of hope that even he, albeit his transgression was so gross, was clad in a covering more significant than was the fig-leaf apron wherewith he sought to hide himself. Be that as it may, I am looking at the ejection of Adam from Eden, or the evidence of the temporal judgment of a Holy God against sin—the plain declaration of God that sin cannot be tolerated in His presence, nay, more, that the sinner himself must be made conscious of this moral government of God.

That Adam was a thief is only too plain. God had reserved to Himself one tree in the garden, and had distinctly forbidden Adam from eating of it. The command was most intelligible, most unmistakeable, “of the tree of knowledge of good and evil,” said the Lord God, “thou shalt *not* eat.”

Could words have been plainer? Was there the least possibility of misapprehension on Adam’s part? Impossible! And yet, alas, in the face of such a command he took of the fruit and did eat. He stole what God had reserved, and became a thief and a malefactor. But this was known to God. Nothing can escape His eye. “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes

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of Him with whom we have to do." It is impossible to touch what belongs to God without His knowledge, or to break His commandments with impunity.

God, therefore, interferes—sifts the matter to the very bottom, shows to Adam his moral ruin, and at length drives him, a wanderer, from the garden.

Well might he cry, as the brand of thief is stamped upon him, and as his soul is deeply conscious of his shame, "unclean, unclean, banished from the presence of God!"

Deeply would he learn the lesson of the shamefulness of sin.

And there, too, at the entrance of the garden, but closing it against his approach, stood the angel with the gleaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life—so that but one word would sound in Adam's ear—death, death, death!

Such was the government of God against the former thief.

But now for the story of the second. He went to the Cross, a companion of the Lord Jesus Christ, but a malefactor, and one who was justly condemned, and who suffered the due reward of his deeds of wickedness. He was, moreover, a blasphemer and reviler of the blessed One who was suffering by his side. His guilt was evident. Guilty of crimes against the law of the land, and of hatred against the Son of God, he there hung over the brink of hell, a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness. No law could extricate him from his doom. He deserved it fully. It was but proper that he should be banished from the presence of God as his predecessors of old. Both were guilty of the same sins. Yet this thief went to Paradise! And on what grounds? Not that of law! but of grace, rich, abundant, triumphant grace! But how? Ah! dear

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reader, He who occupied the central cross was at that time banished from and forsaken of God, but not from any sin He had committed. He was ever holy and precious to God, but for our sake He suffered thus.

“ He took the guilty culprit's place,  
And suffered in his stead,  
For man, O ! miracle of grace,  
For man, the Saviour bled.”

Wondrous, precious truth ! Jesus bore the penalty at the hand of God that was due to the “dying thief,” yea, bore it all, exhausted all the judgment due to him from God because of sin, so that the demands of divine justice were fully met, and the chains of Satan completely broken, and the poor, penitent, “dying thief” could listen to the amazing tidings of grace, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Accordingly, on that day, a thief was welcomed into paradise ; and the blood of the Lord Jesus was the perfect ground of his reception there.

Judgment had fallen on the guiltless, that mercy might rescue the guilty. Mercy and truth had thus met together ; sin was punished, and the sinner saved.

And in this way does God display His government and His grace.

Unpardoned reader, flee with the “dying thief” to the blood of Jesus. Trust that blood, and the paradise of God shall be yours. And then with a grateful and adoring heart live to magnify the grace that sought and found you.

J. W. S.

## THE KINGDOM OF THE ABSENT KING.

### (7.) THE "EVERLASTING GOSPEL"

In the last chapter of this final three, we find, as I believe, not another aspect of the Divine dealings with the mingled crop in the field of Christendom, but a *new* acting, whether in grace or judgment after the merchant-man has possessed himself of his pearl, or in other words, after the saints of the past and the present time are caught up to Christ. "Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world (or age): the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (ver. 47-51).

The parable closes thus (in so far, just as the parable of the tares of the field) with the judgment executed at the appearing of the Lord. The common application of it is to the going forth of the gospel during the present time, and the final separation of bad and good, when the Lord comes. That is, the meaning is considered to be almost identical with the tare-parable. I believe there are some plain reasons against such an interpretation.

For, in the first place, the parallelism of the two parables in that case is certainly against it. There would be little in the picture of the net cast into the sea, that was not simply repetition of what had already been given. And this, at first sight, would not seem natural or likely.

But beside this it is to be considered that scripture plainly gives us another going forth of the gospel of the kingdom, and as the result of it a discriminative judgment when the Son of man comes, apart altogether from



the present going forth of the gospel, and the judgment of the tares of Christendom. The company of sheep and goats, in Matthew xxv., are an instance of this. For there will be no such separation as is there depicted between these sheep and goats, of the true and false among Christian professors, "when the Son of man shall" have "come in His glory." The true among Christian professors, on the contrary, will come with Him to judgment on that day, as we have seen both Col. iii. 4 and Jude bear witness. The judgment of Christendom will not then be discriminative at all: the wheat having been already removed from the field, tares alone will remain in it. Thus in Matth. xxv. neither tares nor wheat can be at all in question.

But after the saints of the present time have been caught up to the Lord, and Christendom has become a tare-field simply, a new work of the Lord will begin in Israel and among the surrounding nations, to gather out a people for *earthly* blessing. It is when God's judgments are upon the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. And this will be a time of "great tribulation," such as for Israel, Matt. xxiv. depicts. Antichrist is there, and the "abomination of desolation" stands in the holy place; yet amid all the evil and sorrow of the time, the "everlasting gospel" goes forth (Rev. xiv. 6, 7) with its call, so opposite to the proclamation of this day of grace *now* being made. "Fear God, and give glory to Him, *for the hour of his judgment is come.*"

Plainly one could not say that yet. We say, it is "the accepted time, the day of salvation," not of judgment. Then it will be the day of judgment. Only after the present day is closed, could the everlasting gospel be preached after that fashion: the old "gospel of the kingdom" indeed, but with the new addition to it of the hour of God's judgment being come.

It is this proclamation of the everlasting gospel that is the key to that company of sheep and goats standing before the throne of the Son of man when He is come.

Now, if we look a little closely, it is just such a state of things as that amid which the everlasting gospel goes forth, that this parable brings before us. A "net cast into the sea" is the picture of the gospel going forth in the midst of unquiet and commotion, the lawless will of man at work everywhere, the wicked "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. lvii. 20).

Moreover, if we turn to the very earliest of Scripture types—to Genesis i.—we shall find confirmation of this view, which is exceedingly striking. In those creative days we find, day by day, the successive steps by which God brought out of ruin the beauty of a scene where at length He could rest, because all was "very good." There need be little wonder to find this but the picture and type of how He, step by step, after the misery and ruin of Adam's fall, is proceeding towards the final production of a scene, in which once again, and never more to be disturbed, because of its goodness He can rest. These days in their respective meaning it is not the place here to point out. The third day, however, speaks of the separation of Israel from among the Gentiles. The waters of the salt and barren sea are the representative of man left to the lusts and passions of his own heart, (according to the figure in Isaiah just referred to) —or in other words, the Gentiles.\* Israel is the "earth," taken up and cultivated of God, to get, if it might be, fruit. The third day speaks of this separation of Israel from the Gentiles, as the first parable of the three we are now looking at, speaks of her as God's earthly treasure.

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\* Compare also, Rev. xvii. 15.

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This is a scene all on earth. The next creative day gives us, however, the furnishing of the heavens, as we have already seen the second parable of the "pearl" does. And if the sun be a type of Christ (as it surely is), that which brings in and rules the day,—the moon is no less a type of the Church, the reflection, however feeble and unstable, of Christ to the world in the night of His absence. The present time, then, is here figured, the time of the revelation, in testimony, both of Christ and of the Church.

And now, if we pass on to the sixth day, we have as plainly in figure the kingdom of Christ come. The rule of the man and woman over the earth,—not rule over the day or night, not the light of testimony, but rule over the earth *itself*,—is a picture of what we call millennial blessing.

Finally in this series comes the Sabbath, God's own rest: He sanctifies the whole day, and blesses it; no other day succeeds.

Now between the fourth and the sixth days, the Church and the millennial dispensations, what intervenes? A period, short indeed in duration, but important enough to occupy thirteen out of the twenty-two chapters of the book of Revelation: the very time to which, as I believe, the parable of the net refers. And then, what is its type, if the fifth day represent it? Once again, the "sea," but the waters now supernaturally productive, teeming with life through the feat of the Almighty. And so it will be in the day of Rev. vii. as the 144,000 of the tribes of Israel, and the innumerable multitude of Gentiles, who have come out of "*the great tribulation*," bear abundant witness. These are the gathering out of the people for earthly blessing, as the fruit of the everlasting gospel.

These passages, then, mutually confirm each other as

applying to a time characterized by Gentile lawlessness, Israel fully partaking of this character, and not yet owned of God, though He be working in her midst. Into this "sea" the net is cast, and, gathering of every kind, when it is full, is drawn to shore.

It is not till AFTER this, that the sorting begins: "which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away." This shows us that the sorting cannot apply to anything which goes on during the time of the preaching of the gospel at all events, for the net is no longer in the waters when it takes place. And it is thus the same thing evidently as that which the interpretation speaks of: "so shall it be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just." This is the clearance of the earth for millennial blessing. When the saints are removed, at that coming of the Lord for His own which 1 Thess. iv. sets before us, the wicked will not be severed from the just, but the just from the wicked. The righteous will be taken and the wicked left. Here it is the reverse of this, the wicked taken, and the righteous left. Thus with the divine accuracy of the inspired Word, which invites scrutiny and rewards attention to its minutest details, it is said in the judgment of the tare-field of Christendom, "they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," but not, "they shall sever the wicked *from among the just*," for the just have been before removed. Here, on the contrary, the righteous are those not taken away to inherit heavenly blessing, but left behind to inherit earthly.\*

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\* Parallel passages will be found in Matt. xxiv. 37-42, and Luke xvii. 24-37. In the Old Testament, the Psalms especially are full of this severing of the wicked from among the just: e. g. Ps. l. 4, 5; xxxvii. 9-11; see also, Mal. iv. 1-3.

With this glance at things which belong to that short, but most momentous season, the season of the earth's travail, before her final great deliverance, the seven-fold sketch of the Kingdom of the *Absent King* necessarily ends. The blessing of earth, as of Israel, necessitates His *presence*, and with that the close of the "kingdom and *patience*," the beginning of that "kingdom and *glory*" which will never end. Well will it be for us if we keep in mind the sure connection between the "patience" and the "glory."

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. ii. 11-13).

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## WHO ARE THE FOOLISH VIRGINS?

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A thought is current in the present day among those who believe in and look for the speedy coming of the Lord and Saviour, which I desire to consider a little in the light of Scripture. It is a point of no small importance to have the truth about, not only as tending to cloud or otherwise, the brightness of the prospect of the Lord's coming, but even as influencing our views of the gospel itself, as in the sequel we may see.

The view I refer to is, that when the Lord calls up His saints to meet Him in the air, according to 1 Thess. iv., *not all* the saints will be caught up to meet Him, but only those among them who have a certain preparedness of heart, beside and beyond the common possession of faith and of the Spirit. To state this in the words of one of its zealous advocates, who regards the "foolish virgins" of Matth. xxv. as illustrating this idea:—"By

these improvident virgins, therefore," he says, "I can understand none other than real Christians, with no stain whatever upon the genuineness of their profession, but whose Christianity lacks that maturity of growth, depth of consecration, and perfection of development, which alone can entitle to the highest honours and joys of the kingdom. The Royalties and Priesthood of the world to come *are not to be reached by the common orders of saintship* . . . There must be a fulness of self-sacrifice for Christ, a completeness of obedience, a thoroughness of sanctification, an ampleness in all the graces of the indwelling Spirit, and a meekness and fidelity under the cross resembling that of Christ himself, or there will be no crowns, no thrones, no kingdoms."\*

I quote this, not as believing that all who hold these views would go as far as the writer in the expression of them. Still, however expressed, the essential idea is the same, and it is perhaps well to have it before us in the full development of which it is capable. Dr. S.'s view (which is also that of very many others, or I should not bring it forward here) is that there is a "duality in the translation of the [living] saints, as also in the resurrection of them that sleep in Christ," at His second coming. He believes that before the troubles which are predicted as attending the close of the present dispensation, the Lord will take up the faithful ones among His people, dead or living, to Himself; and that these only are the kings and priests of Rev. v., the Bride of Matth. xxv., or the "Church of the first-born ones" in Heb. xii. The rest of the true saints are left on earth, shut out from this privileged place, to endure the sufferings of the great tribulation, and to be only caught up to the Lord at His *appearing*.†

\* "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," by Jos. A. Seiss, D.D. p. 63.

† The paper at p. 200, entitled "The Hope of the Morning Star," may be compared.

Of this latter class not only the "foolish virgins" of Matth. xxv., but the "evil servant" of ch. xxiv. 48, and the "wicked and slothful servant" of ch. xxv. 26, are considered to be examples!

A consequence that necessarily follows, is that for those who cannot persuade themselves that they have attained this "completeness of obedience," this "ampleness in all the graces of the indwelling Spirit," the Lord's coming must indeed be a dark and gloomy prospect rather than a "hope." He must indeed be enjoying a very comfortable satisfaction with himself, who has no doubts at all that he will be found among the approved ones in that day. Would Dr. S. himself stand forward and say, "I am the man. I have no doubt, no question of the sort"? If he could, still we should have to ask, is there no possibility of self-deception in the matter? "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." If on the other hand he could not affirm this for himself, what, I again ask, of the "blessed hope"?

He might perhaps urge, that the consideration of the possibility of falling short would stir men up to greater earnestness. Possibly that might be, for it is much easier to stir men (confessedly) by selfish motives than by divine ones. What does this sort of earnestness amount to? If Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again," what would the fear of being shut out of the blessed presence of the Lord to a punishment which could be figured by being "cut asunder," or by the "outer darkness, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth," do to make me more devoted to Him who died for me? Is there "fear in love," spite of the apostle's assurance to the contrary? Does faith work by fear? or fear help one to love more?

Is "devotedness" for fear I should be shut out in outer darkness, really that? Is it living to Him who died for me, or really living in very religious devotedness to myself? There can be but one answer from those who know the true spring and power of Christian life and walk.

Now if we examine the texts which are supposed to teach this doctrine, it will not be hard to show that it is itself quite without any Scriptural basis. The statement of the apostle in 1 Thess. iv., is absolutely against it. It assures us that those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, shall be caught up "together" with those raised from the dead, to meet the Lord in the air. As to the dead, the express purpose of the apostle is to assure the Thessalonian Christians that none of the living would go into glory before these, that the living saints of that time and the risen ones would form but one company. Not a hint is given of such a difference to be made among them as might dash to the ground any such hope as to many; for Dr. S. believes that this distinction will be made both among the living and the dead saints; and it is the only consistent view. For why should the mere fact of being alive or dead at the Lord's coming make any difference as to the judgment of their spiritual state?

But the apostle here knows no distinction either as to the dead or the living. He masses the "dead in Christ" together, and those who "are alive and remain" together. He unites these in one glorious company to meet the Lord in the air. His doctrine is therefore a complete denial of Dr. S.'s and those who side with him. For if one Christian is "alive" at the coming of the Lord, he is necessarily one of those of whom the apostle speaks as to be caught up together with the dead in Christ to meet the Lord in the air.



It is quite true, indeed, that Scripture exhorts to "watch" for the Lord, and says "to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time unto salvation." It is vain to make any distinction between wise and foolish virgins upon this ground, for in point of fact, "they *all* slumbered and slept." (Matth. xxv. 5). This then cannot be the distinction. And furthermore if the letter of the parable is to be pressed, the foolish virgins are in the end as much awake to the coming of the Bridegroom as the wise are. But they are not so "ready."

Furthermore the words "to them that look for Him" are general enough to include all Christians, for they *do* "look for" Him, although sadly perplexed by erroneous teaching as to it, as well as often deficient in earnestness of desire.

Even did "looking for Him" imply more than this, the parable they contend for as favoring their views, would indicate, as we have just now seen, that all would be waked up to look. Short time would suffice with the Lord to accomplish this.

The instance of the "evil servant" in Matth. xxiv. 48, is all against the views contended for. Dr. S. speaks of him as one "as really a servant as the first," but deficient in fidelity and worldly in his temper, and whom his Lord when he comes *severely punishes*" (Last Times, p. 351). Now it is quite true that being "cut asunder" is a severe punishment; but is it fair or right to say as Dr. S. does say, that it does not imply his being lost? In the parable of the pounds (Luke xix. 11-27) he admits that the "slaying" of the citizens who "will not have this man to reign over them," does imply that *they* are lost (see p. 253). Does he consider that cutting asunder is *not* slaying?

And then again, when it is said, "shall appoint him

his portion with the hypocrites," most people would suppose that that meant something more than merely "suffering the great tribulation," as Dr. S. puts it. And surely his having his portion assigned him with the hypocrites means nothing less than that he himself is sentenced as a hypocrite.

But it is objected, that he is called a "servant" and therefore must be a converted man; and on the same principle the one in ch. xxv. 24, or Luke xix. 20, although never having really served, and "*knowing*" his master to be "a hard man." It is difficult to understand the argument. That he had the spirit of service is plainly not the case. That he had the place and responsibility all will admit, but that is no more than is true of every professing Christian. And he is judged as being untrue to the profession.

Again, in the case of the "wicked servant" of Matt. xxv., his portion is declared to be in the outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. Surely Dr. S. would not interpret this of "tribulation judgments." To be consistent he must do so, for Luke xix. 11-27 is strictly parallel, and so he interprets the sentence there. Yet it is the sentence passed upon the one who has not on the wedding garment in ch. xxii., and the latter part of it is found in passages where there can be no question that the doom is an eternal one. (Ch. xii. 42-50).

Thus far, then, the doctrine sought to be based upon these passages is utterly without foundation. We shall now see if the parable of the ten virgins, Dr. S.'s stronghold apparently, as he has written a whole volume to enforce this view of it, will afford it any better one.

And, first, it is contended that "the kingdom of heaven," of which the parable in Matt. xxv. is a similitude, is made up of "subjects born from on high," of

“purged souls, hoping, looking, and waiting for the coming of their Lord to complete their bliss.” (Ten Virgins, p. 11). That this is not so, a large part of the parables which speak of it bear witness. The tares are in the kingdom as well as the wheat; and in the end of this age, “the Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather *out of His kingdom* all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. (Matth. xiii. 41). Were these not in the kingdom before they were cast out? So similarly in the 49th verse of the same chapter, “wicked” as well as “just” are there. In chap. xxii. “bad and good” are again found as guests for the wedding, and the man that has not on the wedding garment is cast out.

These are plain and sufficient instances to shew that the “kingdom of heaven” represents the whole Christian profession, and therefore in the present parable of it we may in like manner expect to find the false as well as the true, the bad as well as the good.

But further, Dr. S. contends that foolish and wise here are alike “virgins”: “that is,” he says, the company “is made up of a community of people who are chaste and pure, beautiful and loving,—of people with a pure faith, beautified with grace, and knowing nothing of the unclean loves of idolatry and wickedness.” Yet he strangely adds, “if they are not wholly cleansed *in fact*, they certainly are by profession” (p. 15), a damaging admission for his cause, one would think. “Virgins in fact or by profession,” would suit the people whose views he is contending against well enough. They are taken for what they profess to be. The event makes manifest what they *are*.

Yet he has to admit as much, because even he cannot find absolute virgin purity in all these “virgins.” Nor are the “foolish” those who have declined from it: they

are foolish at the beginning as at the end; "five of them were wise and five foolish," is said of them from the very first. If then, they are not all absolutely "virgins," save by profession, the line can no where be drawn so as to exclude even the whole mass of unconverted but professing Christians.

But, says Dr. S., "these virgins are all betrothed—under engagements to one who will presently come to claim them as His Bride" (p. 15). This is simply a mistake. The parable does not represent it so at all. For plainly in the "Oriental wedding-scene" which it is admitted furnishes the framework of the parable, the troop of attendant virgins are not "espoused" at all, but quite separate from the "bride," nor is it hinted here that they are the same. Who is the bride in this parable can only be conjectured. She does not come upon the scene. For myself I believe it is the Jewish earthly bride of Jehovah, according to the common figure of the prophets, and that it is while the Lord is on His way to take up Israel once more, and bring them into relation with Himself, that Christians are caught up to meet Him, and come back with him to the marriage. So at least it surely will be, and it is in complete accordance with the whole prophecy of these chapters, which speak throughout of the Lord's coming in that way, and not of the reception to the Father's house above, the heavenly portion of Christians. This, however, is fatal to Dr. S.'s whole argument, for in that case, the foolish virgins are shut out, not from the heavenly marriage, but from the earthly one, and would not be even attendants upon the Lord when he appears in the clouds of heaven to judge and to bless the earth. But to be shut out then must needs be final.

I do not press this, however, although quite believing it, because it is only an indirect argument, and may be

difficult for some to follow. It is enough for my purpose that the parable before us never hints at any identity between the troop of virgins and the bride, and that the whole analogy is quite against it.

I need say nothing about their lamps, as even Dr. S. speaks of the "lamp of public profession" (p. 21). A point of more importance is that the lamps of the foolish are represented as having been lighted, for when the cry comes at midnight, they say "our lamps are *going out*."\* Another thing which I would class along with this, is, that it is said of them all, "They went forth to meet the Bridegroom." Dr. S. insists very much upon these two points, and no wonder, though his remarks are founded upon a misconception merely. There is much in the language of parable everywhere of a similar character, language not to be taken as literally true, but true only from a certain point of view, which may be the hearer's and not the speaker's. Thus in the 15th of Luke, the Lord (it is told us) is speaking in answer to the murmuring of the Pharisees at His receiving sinners (vers. 1-3). He asks them, Does not the shepherd find peculiar joy in the recovery of a *lost* sheep? "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." The Pharisees were these latter. Had they no need of repentance? *In their own eyes* they had none; and the words of the parable hold up thus the mirror before their eyes, that they may recognize themselves in it, and learn that *they* had never caused such joy in heaven, as these sinners were causing then.

Further on in the same chapter these Pharisees find their representative in that elder brother, who murmurs, as they were doing, at the grace which received prodi-

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\*Not "*gone out*," as Dr. S. rightly remarks.

gals. That steady worker in his father's fields, no wanderer, but terribly severe upon the evil in his brother, who can say to his father in all the consciousness of uprightness, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment,"—how easy to understand who was intended there! and then how that would wing home the conviction, what hard service he found it! no kid even to make merry with his friends! little did he know of joy and music in his father's house, who when he heard the music and dancing there, must needs ask what it all meant!

Yet had he "never transgressed?" His conscience took no note of his having done so; he was "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," as to that. That explains the language of the parable, and only that can explain it. This is the sort of speech, however, which perplexes Dr. S., as well as a good many more.

Many and many a professing Christian (and *not* a conscious hypocrite at all, but a very good and pious Pharisee) has in his own thought a brightly burning lamp which perhaps, alas, only the breath of the midnight air will extinguish, as he wakes up at the sudden cry, Behold, the bridegroom cometh. These are the men who are called to look into this mirror and recognize themselves there. They would not recognize themselves at all in the picture of men with *no* lights; but to think of lights that may go out!

This may show the mistake that Dr. S. falls into in supposing that the foolish virgins, as well as the wise, took oil with them (p. 21). The word says, they "took *no* oil," but this he supposes to mean "no oil additional to what their lamps contained." But this is only argued from a lamp being useless without oil, by their going forth at midnight to meet the Bridegroom, and especially by their words, "Our lamps are going out." Use-

less, however, as a lamp is without oil, it is not more so than profession without reality, and might well picture that. And many a man may have a lamp burning bright enough to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, *when there is none to meet*, whose light will rapidly go out at the true coming. All this is simple and intelligible enough, if we remember that style of parabolic language which I have but just now illustrated.

There is no ground whatever for the assertion in entire opposition to Scripture, that the foolish virgins took oil with them. They took *none*: and that was just their folly. But, as Dr. S. truly remarks, "oil is the fixed symbol of the Holy Ghost." Their being without this, then, is their fatal characteristic. "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them."\* That was just their folly, and it marks them in the fullest way as unconverted professors.

In the exposition of the latter verses of the parable Dr. S.'s assumptions become multiplied. He assumes, that because in verse 11, the foolish virgins are simply called "the other virgins," that therefore they are now delivered from their folly. He assumes that "they also procure the requisite supplies of oil" (p. 107). All this needs no reply, for it is simply apart from the Word altogether.

But it is graver, and brings us to the point of the whole matter when he remarks that the words, "I know you not" are "uttered, not as a judge passing final sentence, but as a Bridegroom explaining why he could acknowledge no further applicants to be his Bride, no matter how well qualified they might be for such a position" (pp. 108, 109). This is in the first place disproved by the simple fact that the parable is totally

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\* Lit. "with themselves;" which makes it plain, that it was not merely no oil along with their lamps (i.e. additional to what these contained) but none at all.

against the identification of the troop of virgins with the bride. They are attendants only, from the point of view taken in the chapter here.

And as to the privileges of the Bride of the Lamb being the reward of a certain class among real Christians only, it is a dream as baseless as all the rest. "The bride, the Lamb's wife," is pictured for us in Rev. xxi. xxii. as the "great city, the holy Jerusalem;" and we are told, "there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." All true Christians are surely in the book of life. Again it is added, "Blessed are they that do His commandments,\* that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are"—what? a second and inferior class of Christians? No, but—"dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie."

These simple texts are decisive against Dr. S.'s view. We have seen that the parable in question gives no support to it. Any one that can read Eph. v. 23-32 may see how little foothold for it there is there.

Dr. S. believes that he finds in "the Church of the first-born ones" (Heb. xii. 23), the same select company of advanced Christians. He will find, if he looks further, perhaps, that the only body of saints in heaven put in contradistinction to these, is the Old Testament saints, who are evidently, as a body, "the spirits of just men made perfect." The "Church of the first-born ones" embraces thus all the saints of the present time.

I have quoted already words which shew us that Dr. S. makes the becoming "kings and priests to God" also

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\* In the earliest and best MSS., "Blessed are they that have washed their robes."



conditional upon the possession of piety "beyond the ordinary run of Christian attainment" (p. 68). He has forgotten the apostle's words to all believers, "ye also, *as living stones* are built up a spiritual house, an *holy priesthood*;" and once again, "ye are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*" (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). If this were conditional, it was only upon their being "living stones," which all the converted are; and the apostle says to them, "*Ye are . . . a royal priesthood*," not "ye may attain to it if ye run well."

Thus in none of these senses could the Lord say to His people, "I know you not." He could not say so to any one saint of His, for He Himself says, "I know my sheep." No loss of reward on their part could ever make Him deny this. No one can ever bring forward one word of Scripture to shew that the words in question, which are the denial of His knowledge of these people personally,—of any acquaintance with them,—can possibly be modified into the affirming that they had lost reward. Take it in whatever character you will, "the Lord **KNOWETH** them that are His;" and if His, He will own *them*, whatever their works may be.

I would not wish to speak otherwise than strongly of a view which introduces a dark cloud of legality over the brightest hopes of the Christian, falsifying the Lord's sweet assurance, "I will come and receive you to myself," with the dark foreboding, "Perhaps He will not receive *me*," while the self-confident and self-complacent are those encouraged. The character of Christian life and service is perverted by it. Things are held out as the rewards of service, which are the simple fruits of Christ's work for every believer. And reward itself being given as a motive for exertion instead of Christ's love constraining, those who accept such teaching are in the fair way to lose it. Self-seeking is more

dangerous to the saint in the garb of devoutness, than in the open *undisguise* of worldliness and indulgence.

I have taken up Dr. S.'s book, because one may fairly take it as a sort of standard of views largely obtaining now among a certain class; and because it is well to take up plainly what is very openly put forth as needed admonition to the Church at large. The Lord give His dear ones to hear *His* voice who says, "I know my sheep," says it to and of the poorest, humblest, most unworthy of His people. I do not in this advocate laxity, God forbid. But I am sure "we love Him because He first loved us," and that what makes one holy is just what makes one happy in undoubting assurance of this love. "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." He does not purify himself to have the hope, but because he has it.

Work as hard as you please to escape the tribulation, brethren, you are working for yourselves and not for Christ. Just so far as this motive has power over you, it necessarily displaces the true Christian principle of "living not unto ourselves but unto Him who died for us and rose again."

There *are* rewards. Not a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, because the Master is dear to you, shall lose its reward. But once make the reward the object, and you miss it, for you are not doing it for the love of Christ, but for the reward. It is hired service. God needs none such. It is wretched legality. We are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

The way in which Scripture connects the judgment of works for the saint, and the apportionment of rewards, with the Lord's coming, is exceedingly beautiful, while it is in itself a complete answer to the theories we have been examining. With the Lord's coming *for* His saints

is associated no thought of judgment; no question of one's works at all. Simply He comes to receive us to *Himself*, into the many mansions of the Father's house, that where He is there we may be also (Jno. xiv). He comes Himself in the joy of His love to give us the greeting and the welcome. We get the fruit, not of what *we* have done, but what *He* has done. No sentry is at the door of the Father's house; no challenge awaits us there.

Raised or changed, and having put on the image of the heavenly, the dead in Christ, and those alive and remaining to the coming of the Lord are caught up without exception to meet the Lord in the air and be ever with Him. There is no cloud upon this prospect. To be shut out is impossible for any Christian. He must be among the dead in Christ who are changed, or among the living who are caught up with them.

It is in connection with His "appearing" or "revelation" only, that the question of reward comes in. It has nothing to do with the family-place or with membership of the body of Christ; nor even with priesthood, kingship, or the privileges of the Bride. These things are ours by His grace simply, the result of His work for us, and the gift of His love to us. What is all the highest reward of our own work, which will distinguish us from one another, compared with that reward of *His*, which we shall enjoy in common?

But when He comes *with* His saints, those apportionments over ten cities or over five, that giving of *distinctive* crowns, &c., will take place.\* The roll of the true

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\* I append some main passages which can easily be referred to in proof of this: Matt. xix. 28-30, Luke xix. 15; 1 Cor. i. 7, 8 (*margin*); 1 Thess. iii. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Dr. S.'s texts from Revelation will come up for consideration in a paper which will appear, if the Lord will, in the next's year's issue. They do not apply (except Rev. iv. v.) to the saints of the present dispensation at all, but to those converted after the removal of the Church to heaven, and who are to inherit blessing upon the *earth*.

David's mighty men will be unfolded, and each will receive according as his work shall be. Concerning the result of that, it does become us indeed to be humble, but it touches nought of what we have in Christ together.

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“THE MORNING COMETH.”

O hark ! I have news, glad news for thee,  
 It has thrilled my soul with joy,  
 And to sound it abroad henceforth shall be  
 My life-long sweet employ.  
 The morning cometh ! The radiant time  
 We have long'd for, draweth nigh !  
 O publish the tidings in every clime,  
 Proclaim them from earth to sky !

Hast thou watch'd in the gray dim light of dawn,  
 Ere the sunbeam shineth forth,  
 When all is still, save the fluttering breeze  
 Which stirreth and whispereth mid the trees,  
 And seemeth to call on their myriad leaves  
 To wake and to welcome the coming morn ?  
 So methinks I have seen earth's stars grow dim,  
 And her moonlight fade away ;  
 And all around, I have heard the sound  
 Of *His* Spirit's breath, in this realm of death,  
 Bidding us wake and watch for Him !

And then, as the sunbeam breaketh forth,  
 And lighteth with glory the waking earth,  
 Hast thou heard the sweet burst of joyous praise  
 Which seemeth to rise in the morning lays  
 Of the wild birds to the sun ?  
 Thus soon shall a song, a wondrous song,  
 Triumphant, glorious, free,  
 Hail the first ray of that endless day  
 And praise *Him* eternally !  
 For the morning cometh ! The radiant time  
 We have longed for, draweth nigh !  
 O, publish the tidings in every clime,  
 Proclaim them from earth to sky !