

Things New and Old,

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FOR THE LAMBS AND SHEEP OF THE FLOCK
OF CHRIST.



“Feed the flock of God.”—1 Peter v. 2.



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Things New and Old.

THE DYING THIEF.

(Luke xxiii. 39—43.)

It is, at once, interesting and profitable to contemplate the two distinct classes of persons presented, in the New Testament, as subjects of divine grace. We see one class whom we should deem very good ; and another class whom we should consider very bad. Take, for example, Cornelius, the centurion of Cæsarea, and the thief on the cross. We could hardly find a more striking contrast than is presented in these two men ; and yet did they both need, the one as well as the other, the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. The pious centurion, as well as the dying thief, needed to be washed in the atoning blood of Christ to fit him for the presence of God. The one needed nothing more, and the other could do with nothing less, than that precious sacrifice.*

Now, it is full of interest and instruction to notice the condition of these two persons when first the salvation of God shone upon their souls. Look at the picture of Cornelius. Here it is, in the veritable language of the Holy Ghost. "There was a certain man in Cæsarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." (Acts x.) What a character ! Might we

* We do not doubt in the least, that Cornelius was a quickened soul, and one honestly acting up to his light, but he did not know salvation ; and hence it is that his case illustrates, so forcibly, the indispensable necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

not, naturally enough, enquire, "Whatever can such a man want beyond what he already possesses? A devout, God-fearing, charitable, prayerful man? Surely, he is all right." It would be difficult indeed to find any one in a more hopeful condition, or one whom we should be more disposed to regard as an enlightened and pious Christian. And yet was there one thing lacking, and that thing absolutely indispensable. There is, in the record of what he was, not a syllable about Jesus and His atoning blood. Let this be carefully noted. It may perhaps happen that this paper should fall into the hands of one who denies the need of the atonement of Christ—one who believes that human nature is capable of being so far cultivated and ameliorated as to be able to dispense with the sacrificial death of the Son of God. Let such an one think of Cornelius. He, with all his piety and benevolence, required to send for Simon Peter, and to hear words of him whereby he and all his house should be saved. (Compare Acts x. 22 with chap. xi. 14.)

Observe, "He was warned from God by an holy angel, to send for thee into his house, and to *hear words* of thee." This is of the deepest moment. A man who was continually engaged in the practice of good works—works most valuable in themselves, was called upon to hearken to words, and find in those words salvation. It was not, by any means, that the works were not most precious so far as they went. So far from this, we are told, by the inspired penman, that Cornelius received divine testimony as to their value. He was told that his prayers and his alms had come up for a memorial before God. They furnished precious evidence of the sincerity and earnestness of his soul, and as such they were owned of God. This will ever be the case, and it is well to remember it. Every earnest soul that honestly lives up to his light will assuredly be owned of God, and get more light. But, then, be it remembered, Cornelius had to *hearken to words*, in order to be saved. What words? Words about Jesus of Nazareth

—words about His holy, spotless, loving life, His atoning death and triumphant resurrection. These were the “words” which were sent from heaven, through Peter’s lips, and let fall upon the ear and into the heart of the earnest and pious centurion of Cæsarea. These words opened up a new world, and presented a new object altogether to the heart of Cornelius. Alms and prayers were good; but a crucified and risen Jesus—a Jesus once nailed to the tree, but now glorified in heaven, was far better. Prayers and alms might ascend as a memorial to heaven, but only the blood of Christ could bring Cornelius thither. Not all the prayers that ever ascended from earnest hearts, nor all the alms that ever flowed from the hand of benevolence could conduct a guilty sinner into the presence of a holy God. The blood and the blood alone can bring the sinner nigh to God, be he centurion or malefactor. The very best of men can do with nothing less, and the very worst of men need nothing more, than that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin. This is an all-important truth, and cannot be too urgently pressed upon the reader’s attention. If such an one as Cornelius had to look off from all his works and hearken to “words”—if he was called to look away from himself and find in a crucified and risen Saviour all he needed—if, in a word, this man of good report for piety and active benevolence needed to hear of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as the only ground of a sinner’s acceptance before God, then it is obvious that, no matter what a man may possess in the shape of piety and almsdeeds, unless he has Christ he is unsaved. If there be so much as the thickness of a goldleaf between the soul and Christ, there is no life. This cannot be too solemnly or too earnestly pressed upon the heart in this day of religiousness. The devil is busy in seeking to displace Christ by ordinances and ceremonies—to hide that blessed One behind the dark cloud of religious formality and routine. He is publishing far and wide dangerous and soul-destroying error as to the powers that

are in man—the so-called dignity of human nature—what man can be brought to by education, science, and philosophy. The cross of Jesus Christ is set aside, in various ways. Men are taught that they do not want that at all—that each one has in himself certain powers which only need to be properly cultivated and fully evolved in order to raise him to such a height of virtue and moral excellence as shall secure to him the possession of eternal felicity?

Now, we solemnly warn the reader against all this fatal delusion. We hesitate not to pronounce it Satan's lie—a lie which he is craftily seeking to gild and decorate in the most fascinating manner, in order to shut out all thought of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. If it should so happen that the name of Jesus is thought of or named at all, He is merely looked at as one who lived and died in order to set an example of exalted virtue, which man, by the exercise of his innate power, can follow. The fall of man is denied, his total depravity explained away—his reason almost deified. Man is taught that he does not need the death of Christ to save him, he can save himself—that he does not need the word and Spirit of God to guide him, he can guide himself by his own reason and moral sense.

How important, in the face of all this, is the lesson taught us in the tenth of Acts! There we see a man of exalted virtue and ardent piety, who laid on his family altar the continual sacrifice of prayer, and whose liberal hand was ever open to meet the need of his fellow-creature. And yet this man had to listen to "*words*," and in those words to find salvation and a Saviour. Let the reader turn for a moment, to Peter's address in the house of Cornelius. We should like to quote it at length; but there is no need. We would merely ask, what is the substance of it? What is its grand and glorious theme? JESUS! Yes, Jesus, the object of divine delight—Jesus, the subject of prophetic testimony—Jesus, the ground of the sinner's confidence and eternal salvation. "To him give all the prophets wit-

ness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Mark those words, "believeth *in him*." It is not merely believing something about Him, or something that He did; but believing *in Him*. It is faith in His Person that gives life and salvation to the ruined and guilty sinner. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

We shall now turn to the dying thief, and see what his case teaches as to the power and value of the blood of Jesus. The contrast between him and Cornelius is full of interest and instruction. There are two ways in which Satan seeks to delude and destroy souls. He comes to one person, and whispers into his ear, "You are not so very bad as to need salvation." He comes to another, and whispers into his ear, "You are too bad to think of ever getting it." Now, the centurion of Cæsarea affords an answer to the former. The thief on the cross affords an answer to the latter. If any one is so far led astray by the blinding power of the deceiver and destroyer of souls, as to think that he does not need salvation through the atoning death of Jesus Christ—if he considers himself all right, and square, and safe, because he has never done anything very wrong—does not wish any one ill—does his duty as a husband, a father, a master, a servant, a neighbour, a friend—attends to his religion, whatever it is—supposing for a moment that all this is true, to what does it amount? Clearly it does not go beyond the case of Cornelius, for he had an angel sent from heaven to tell him that his prayers and his alms had come up for a memorial before God. And what then? Did his prayers and his alms save him? No; they only proved that he was sincerely seeking to serve God according to his light—that he was anxious to find the truth, and, through mercy, he found it—found it in Jesus of Nazareth, crucified, buried, and raised again. It is not, by any means, that his works were not genuine and valuable. They were; but it is precisely because they

were so, that we learn so forcibly from his history, that nothing but the atoning death of the Son of God can save even the very best of men.

Then, again, if any one should say, "I am too bad—too wretched—too guilty to be saved—I am beyond the reach of mercy," let such an one look at the case of the dying thief. It would be hard indeed to find any one lower down in the scale than he. He had been condemned by the law of his country to die an ignominious death on account of his crimes; and, not only so, but while hanging on the cross, and standing at the very portal of the eternal world, he was engaged in the terrible wickedness of railing upon the Son of God. It may be said, "He did not know Him to be the Son of God when he was railing upon Him." True, but still he did rail upon Him, and, in so doing, he proved the deep moral darkness in which his guilty soul was plunged.

It is important to see that both the malefactors were engaged in blaspheming and insulting the dying Saviour. It greatly magnifies the grace that shines so brightly in the salvation of the penitent. Matthew, in his narrative, tells us that, "The *thieves* also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." (Matt. xxvii. 44.) So also, in Mark, we read, "*They* that were crucified with him reviled him." Mark xv. 32.

Thus, then, the dying thief stands before us as a specimen of the very worst form of fallen humanity. There is not a single redeeming feature. He was a condemned malefactor, nailed to a cross, and, in that awful condition, reviling and blaspheming the Son of God. But he was not beyond the reach of divine love; nay, he was just one in which that love could display its triumph. Jesus came to seek and to save that which is *lost*. And that word "lost" describes the condition of men who may stand at the very antipodes—at the very opposite points of what is called the moral, social, and religious world. The thief was lost—the centurion was lost; and, albeit, the one is

presented to us at the very lowest point of guilt and degradation; and the other, as treading the lofty walks of piety and benevolence; yet were they both, in themselves, lost, guilty, and undone—needing, the one as well as the other, to be washed in the atoning blood of the Lamb of God.

But let us look a little closely at the narrative of the dying thief. It is very evident that the Holy Spirit in Luke takes him up at the moment in which the first ray of divine light penetrated his dark and benighted soul. Matthew and Mark present the crowning evidence of his guilt. Luke lets us see the earliest dawns of divine grace. We must put both together in order to have a proper view of the penitent thief. The divine record of aggravated guilt enhances the value of divine grace. It proves that our Saviour-God has gone down to the very lowest depths of man's condition—that there is salvation, full, free, and everlasting salvation, for the very vilest of men—that no one is beyond the reach of the sovereign mercy and grace of God. This is what we learn from the case of the dying thief, looked at by itself; but when we look at it in connexion with Cornelius, we learn, in the fullest possible manner, the perfect efficacy and absolute necessity of the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The dying thief shows me the former; the living centurion shows me the latter. The one needed nothing more, the latter could do with nothing less, than the propitiatory sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The crime and guilt of the former were cancelled by the blood of the cross, and the alms and prayers of the latter were insufficient without it. Let all who think themselves too bad to be saved, look at the thief on the cross. Let all who think themselves too good to want salvation, look at the centurion of Cæsarea. If the centurion needed the blood of Jesus, then who can do without it? And if the thief was saved by the blood of Jesus, who need despair? The two cases,

taken together, illustrate, in the most forcible manner, the utter insufficiency of man's best efforts, and the perfect efficacy and all-sufficiency of the atoning work of Christ.

And now let us mark the progress of the work of grace in the soul of the dying malefactor. He was, in every respect, a fit and proper subject for the action of that grace.

We may, observe, then, that the moment the arrow of conviction entered his soul, he began at the right point, even at that which Scripture declares to be the beginning of wisdom. He says to his fellow, "Dost thou not fear God?" What a change! We are not told what it was that produced such a change. But we know that between the point presented in Matthew and Mark, and that presented in Luke, a mighty change had taken place. A ray of divine light had entered his soul; and inasmuch as every ray of divine light that has ever shone in this dark world has come through the medium of Jesus of Nazareth, we may believe that the eye of the poor dying thief had been opened to see something of the divine glory of that blessed One who hung beside him on the cursed tree. "Dost thou not fear God?" he says, "seeing we are in the same condemnation; and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." He does not say, "Dost thou not fear wrath, judgment, or future punishment?" No; it is "the fear of God" that is before his eyes; and it is well to note this. Very many are governed by the fear of future punishment; and no doubt the Spirit of God may, at times, press that home, in overwhelming power, upon the soul. It is right to urge upon men the solemn importance of fleeing from the wrath to come—to set before them faithfully the certain consequences of their sins; to point out, in great plainness of speech, the inevitable doom of all who die in their sins. All this is right and seasonable; but then we must bear in mind that "the fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom" The Holy Ghost will always im-

press the heart with a sense of the seriousness of having to do with God Himself, and then it is not so much a question of the consequences of sin as of the hatefulness of the thing itself in the sight of God. When God gets His right place in the heart, everything else will follow; we shall then look at ourselves, our ways, our condition, our sins, and the state of our hearts, our nature and all its fruits, in the light of what God is. A person may seem to be deeply affected, for a time, by the fear of wrath and eternal punishment. The thought of hell fire, of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and the worm that never dieth, may cause a chill to pass through the heart, and check, for a moment, the sinner in his career of sin. But there may not be one particle of the true fear of God in all this, and, as a consequence, when the momentary terror passes off, the tide of lust and passion returns, with augmented force, and bears the man away like a cork upon its bosom.

Not so when the Spirit of God lays upon the soul the solemn sense of what it is to have to do with God—when He fills the heart with the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Then sin is not measured by its consequences to us, but by its hatefulness to Him. We shall not so much be occupied with the results of sin, real and terrible as these assuredly are, but with the vileness of sin itself. We shall hate sin for its own sake, as a thing which God hates. We shall fully own what is sin's just condemnation, but we shall chiefly dwell upon the true nature and character of sin, in its principle, as seen in the light of the holiness of God.

But it is truly wonderful to mark the way in which this dying thief is led on by divine teaching. He seems to pass, with amazing rapidity, from stage to stage, laying hold of great foundation truths of revelation. He takes his true place as a sinner, justly condemned. "We receive the due reward of our deeds." Instead of railing upon the blessed Lord, and derisively saying, "If thou be the

Christ save thyself and us," he, under the holy influence of the fear of God, owns himself justly condemned, bears testimony to his companion, and faithfully reproveth his blasphemy—a blasphemy, too, in which he had himself so lately participated. He then turns to Jesus and owns His spotless manhood—that great foundation truth of Christianity. "This man hath done nothing amiss." Here he offers a flat contradiction to the chief priests, the elders, and scribes, the nation of Israel, and the world at large. All had agreed to deliver Him as an evildoer; but this dying malefactor declares that He had done nothing amiss; and although it may be said that this testimony only goes the length of declaring that it was for nothing amiss that He had been condemned to death, yet does the grand fact remain untouched, namely, the thief on the cross gave the lie to the world in reference to Jesus. The world had condemned Him and cast Him out—it had nailed Him to a shameful cross, the most ignominious death it could have imposed upon Him; but in the midst of the dark shadows of that awful cross, the clear and unreserved testimony came forth from the lips of a convicted and penitent malefactor, "This man hath done nothing amiss."

Precious, invaluable, glorious testimony! How it must have refreshed the heart of the dying Saviour, in the midst of all the reproach and blasphemy, the opposition and hatred of men and devils, to hear from the lips of this poor thief such a testimony! The blessed Lord had been forsaken by all His disciples. They fled from Him in the dark and evil hour. How like man! The whole world—the Jew, the Gentile, the civil and ecclesiastical powers—the hosts of hell—all were ranged against the Son of God; but in the midst of this scene of untold and unimaginable horrors, one solitary voice breaks forth in accents clear and bold, and bears this testimony, "This man hath done nothing amiss."

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

MEDITATIONS
ON THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

VER. 5. "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*" The bereaved and benighted pilgrim now enters a new path of experience. He is emerging from the thick darkness of the valley. Light from on high is breaking through the clouds, and scattering its beams over his path. He only begins to *realize* what has happened, and to find out where he is. The departure of his fellow-pilgrim is no dream of the night, but a stern reality under the hand of the Lord. It meets him everywhere and in every form. He has never been this lonely way before, but the footsteps of many are found here, and of *Him* who knows from experience every step of the way, and how to succour those who are passing through these gloomy regions. Heb. ii. 17, 18.

Happy thought! The dark and dreary valley, with its days and nights of heaviness, introduce, in due time, the exhausted pilgrim to the rich provisions of the Shepherd's care, and to a more intimate acquaintance with Himself. "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*" He is still in the wilderness, and in the presence of his enemies, but divine refreshment is provided to strengthen him on his way, and in the presence of the Lord all enemies are powerless. Thus, the good Shepherd, when the first heat of the trial is over, causeth His weary ones to sit down under His protection, and partake of the rich repast, which He has dressed with His own hands. Blessed Lord, what thoughtful love and tender care are thine! In the day of nature's extreme weakness, when there is not so much strength left as to see a friend, far less to encounter a foe, thou thinkest of us, and carest for us. Others may upbraid, but thou upbraidest not. Secured by thy presence, we sit in safety at thy table, feed on the

bounties of thy love, and are hidden under the shadow of thy wing, from the assaults of our enemies.

Sayest thou, my soul, canst thou say, as many, that such a repast—such an expression of the Lord's own deep sympathies, would amply repay all thy sore travel through the valley? I seek not so to balance things—I cannot—I dare not propose to my Lord another such journey through the desert for anything. Still, if He leads the way, there must be unspeakable blessedness to the soul in following Him. But there is no reason why the Christian should not be perfectly happy with the Lord, though in the depths of sorrow.

“The Lord is my shepherd,” he may well say at all times, “I shall not want.”

“Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack.
His wisdom never faileth,
His sight is never dim,
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.”

But here it may be profitable to observe, in meditating on this new line of experience, that the good Shepherd is not now leading the soul beside the still waters, and the green pastures. No, He has done so already. He is now leading the soul into further and higher truth, and into a path of richer experience. As the *babes*, in the second chapter of John's first epistle, know *Abba, Father*, and the *forgiveness of sins*, so the flock of the good Shepherd in our beautiful psalm, start on their journey in the knowledge of Himself, and of what He is to them, and of His grace and love in their salvation. But as we also read in the same chapter of “young men and fathers,” so here, some are led on to a more individual character of blessing. “Thou preparest a table before me.....thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”

For example; the woman who came to Jesus, in the house of Simon, under deep distress of soul about her sins, He introduced at once, we may say, to the green pastures and still waters. He met her heart's distress about sin with a *plenary* pardon—salvation and peace. He thus led her, without raising a single question as to the past or present, into the grace and love of His heart, and into the value and power of His cross. He made her, as it were, to lie down, to find perfect rest, in the green pastures, and beside the peaceful waters of His boundless mercy. Such is the Lord's way in grace with every soul that comes to Him; and such is the inalienable heritage of every sheep and lamb of His flock. As to these things, there is no difference between the babes, young men, and fathers. One may know them better than another, and enjoy them more than another, but they are the same to all. And observe, further, He never needs to repeat these precious sayings. The word has gone forth from His mouth, and "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." When He has said, "Thy sins are forgiven, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace," these words *endure for ever*. Just as the blood on the door posts never was repeated.

"Blest Lamb of God, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till every ransomed saint of God
Be saved to sin no more."

Let us now turn, in further illustration of the truth before us, to the bereaved sisters of Bethany. They, too, were in great distress, but of a very different kind to hers who bathed His feet with tears. It was no question with Martha and Mary as to forgiveness and justification, but of needed consolation and strength, in the hour of their deep sorrow, and of nature's utter weakness. And, oh, what new treasures He opens out to them! The deep treasures of His love, tenderness, sympathies, power, and consolations. Oh, what sights they saw, what words they

heard, and what blessings they received! "But for the death of their brother," as one has sweetly said, "they might never have seen the Redeemer's tears." But this was not all, though these tears must be the wonder of heaven, and the deepest consolation of His bereaved ones in all ages. They are embalmed in the heart of sorrow. But the mourning sisters were also privileged to see, not only the most touching expression of His manhood, but the crowning display of His Godhead. "Jesus wept"—"Lazarus, come forth." And it was to them, in their deep sorrow, that He revealed the blessed truth—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

What glory to God, may we not say—what a telling forth of what our Jesus is—what comfort for the mourner—what blessing to Mary, flowed from the death of Lazarus! In a high and blessed sense, the soul has only to do with the Lord Himself at such a time. Experience becomes more and more a personal thing. Now, it is not so much the language of the soul—what great things the Lord has *done* for me, as, what the Lord *Himself* is to me. Communion is not only a real but a personal thing "*Thou* preparest a table before *me*." "*Thou*"—"me." And sweeter far than tongue can speak, or pen can write, is the refreshment which the Lord provides at such times. It comes with the unmistakable impression of His own hand.

He who knows the end from the beginning, and sees what is coming, alone can make provision. Nothing takes Him by surprise. The cloud that has darkened the heavens, and desolated the earth, He saw, before it was the size of a man's hand. It may have come upon the pilgrim, suddenly, like a thunder-clap, so that, for the moment, he knew not where to look—what to say—or, what to do. He was overwhelmed—his soul was sinking in deep waters. But there was one eye that saw what was

coming, and prepared for it. And, oh, what a preparation is His! With wonder and amazement, the soul can only worship, in the presence of a love that has thought of everything, and provided for everything, even to the least thing. Adorable Lord, what grace is thine! what care for thy people! But, why wonder? No event, no circumstance in the event, could be too minute for Him who counts the hairs of our head, and suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His providence.

ALONE UPON THE TROUBLED WATERS!

Take an illustration from Scripture of His present watchful care over His people; an illustration too, which is the result of His rejection on earth. (See Matt. xiv. 22, 36; also, Mark vi.; John vi.) "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitude away." It turned out to be a dark and stormy night, and, to outward appearance, the disciples were left alone in the midst of the raging billows. "The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary." But there was no Jesus in the ship with them—no blessed master to compose their troubled minds, or encourage their drooping hearts. "And it was now dark, and Jesus was not there." Had the night been calm and clear, they would not have felt His absence in the same way. But now everything seemed against them. The troubled sea—the stormy wind—the darkness of the night—the difficulty in rowing, and the Lord's absence, made their position one of perplexity and distress. No doubt, they were ready to conclude, that not only had their Master forsaken them, but that the elements had conspired against them.

But where is the Lord all this time, and whither has He gone? Has He ceased to care for His disciples? or, is He not aware of their distress? He has gone to the place of

power, and that power He is using on their behalf. From the mountain, whither He had gone to pray, His all-seeing eye is following them unweariedly. Not a single wave has touched the vessel without His measuring hand; and not a breath of wind, that He has not sent forth from its chambers. He is at the helm, we may say, both of the winds, the waves, and the vessel. His hand lays hold on everything—He rules over all. Never was He more near to His people, or they more dear to Him, than when they were passing through the storm, apparently alone.

The whole scene is a living picture of the richest instruction, and sweetest comfort, and of what has actually taken place. Personally, of course, the Lord and His disciples were apart, but in spirit and in power He was present with them. He permitted the storm to arise in His absence for the trial of their faith. And who does not find it hard now, to pull against a strong head wind? But so it is with the people of God in the present period. The world has crucified their Lord, and they have to cross the troubled sea of this life alone. The Church is as a widow and desolate, so that she is to keep up the remembrance of her Lord's death, and her own identification with Him in it, according to His will, until He come. Her place of lonely widowhood is never to be forgotten. To deny it, would be to deny that her Lord was slain.

But let us return for a moment to the exquisite scene before us. Towards the close of that interesting day, the ancient prediction was fulfilled. "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread." Thousands of the people were miraculously fed, and, as we read in John, they wanted to take Him by force and make Him a king. But Jesus perceiving this, "departed again into a mountain Himself alone." The hour was not yet come for the crown of David to flourish on the head of his son and Lord. The people were in unbelief, and He would not be made a king to gratify their worldly desires.

He departs from them, and goes up to a mountain to pray alone. He refuses to be king by the will of man, but He takes the place of priest before God. Blessed fruit of His rejection.

But here, carefully observe, and mark well, O my soul, the hand of the Master in drawing this beautiful picture. Before He ascends up on high, He dismisses the multitude, or the unbelieving nation. Then He gathers His disciples, or the believing remnant, into a ship, and launches them on a tempestuous sea alone. And now, He goes Himself to a mountain to make intercession for them. "And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, he was there alone." But during the long, dark night of His absence, His eye of love, which neither slumbers nor sleeps, followed His loved, though tossed and tried ones, all the way through the deep. O blessed Lord, what a night that was to thee! Its silent watches must have pictured to thy far-seeing eye these last eighteen hundred years and more. During the long dark night of man's day, thy beloved ones have had to meet an opposing current in this evil age, which is indeed hard to strive against. But the morning watch brings relief. This dark and dreary night, with its toiling and rowing, will soon be past. "Surely I come quickly," is the word of Jesus; and the Spirit speaks as if we could count on nothing more than "the twinkling of an eye," between us and the coming of the Lord.

"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked

on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Peter may represent the Church. He leaves the position of the Jewish remnant, and goes out in faith to meet the Lord, without the support of nature. But he fails, as the Church has done; he fails, as she has done, through not keeping Christ and His word before him. He looked at the waves—the circumstances, in place of looking to the Lord. So long as Christ filled his eye, he imitated Him, and walked on the sea as He did. But the moment his eye is off Christ, and on the billows, he begins to sink. Faith can walk on rough waters as well as smooth, if the eye is kept on the Lord. The Lord had said "Come," to Peter, and that was enough. He who created the elements, could make the sea a pavement for His servant. When Christ and His word are kept before the soul, we can walk on the rough sea of life as well as on the smooth waters.

But, oh, gracious Lord, thou art as ready to answer the cry of distress, as the voice of faith! But the honour that belongs to the walk of faith is lost. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship the wind ceased." The Lord, in company with Peter, rejoins the disciples in the ship, and immediately the troubled waters are at rest. When the Lord and His heavenly Bride return to Israel, all their troubles and persecutions will be at an end. He will be owned and worshipped as their own Messiah, the son of David, the Son of God. "Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying

Of a truth thou art the Son of God." But the blessing flows out unto all the earth.

"And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesareth. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they went out into that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched him were made perfectly whole." Here we have a bright millennial scene. The Lord is received joyfully. The place of His former humiliation and rejection is now the scene of His power and glory. He has come down from the place of His intercession. His ancient people who were in deep waters, He immediately brings to a peaceful shore. In the world, which is filled with the works of Satan, He exercises His power in healing and blessing. He relieves a distressed and groaning creation. The trail of the serpent disappears, and joy and gladness, health and beauty, fill all lands. Hasten, O Lord, hasten in thy time, that promised, coming, happy day.

But, meanwhile, may those who are *now* toiling through the deep waters, in patience possess their souls. Surely, we know thee better than did thy disciples of old. Thy love has been fully manifested, and we know thine un-failing intercession for us at God's right hand in heaven. The night may be dark, the billows high, the wind boisterous; circumstances may be cheerless, joyless, and gloomy, but "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The tempest-tossed vessel will soon reach the shores of eternal rest, and be welcomed by many who have been safely landed there before. Till then, O most gracious Lord, may our hands be kept steady at the oars, and our hearts confiding in thee, while we sleeplessly watch for the first radiance of the Morning Star.

AS THOU WILT.

Go not far from me, O my strength,
 Whom all my times obey.
 Take from me—anything thou wilt,
 But go not *Thou* away.
 So let the storm that bears me home,
 Deal with me as it may.

On thy compassion I repose,
 In weakness and distress ;
I will not ask for greater ease,
Lest I should love thee less.
 Oh! 'tis a blessed thing for me,
 To **NEED** thy tenderness.

Thy love hath many a hidden path,
 No outward eye can trace ;
 And, through the darkest night, my heart
 Leaps to behold thy face ;
 And communes with thee 'mid the storm,
 As in a *quiet* place.

O Comforter of God's redeemed,
 Whom the world does not see,
 I wish not to avoid the flood
 That casts my soul on thee.
 Who *would* not suffer pain like mine,
 To be consoled like me ?

When I am feeble, as a child,
 And flesh and heart give way,
 Then, on thine everlasting strength,
 With passive trust I stay ;
 And the rough wind becomes a song,
 The darkness shines like day.

It is *not* hard to bear, in faith,
In thine own bosom laid,
 The trial of a soul redeemed,
 For thy rejoicing made.
 Well may the heart in patience rest,
 That none can make afraid.

“ Deep unto deep ” may call, but I
 With peaceful heart will say,
 Thy lovingkindness has a charge
No wave can take away.
 So let the storm that speeds me *home*,
 Deal with me as it may.

THE DYING THIEF.

(PART II.)

IT has sometimes been remarked that the thief had no opportunity of doing good works; and if, by this it be meant that he performed no deeds of charity, that he gave no alms, that he brought forth no fruits of active benevolence, it is a just remark; and if such things were essentially necessary to salvation, then, assuredly, the thief was unsaved. His hands were nailed to a cross, they could not therefore be stretched forth in acts of charity. His feet were nailed likewise, they could not therefore tread the pathway of active benevolence. All this is clear enough. His feet, while he had the use of them, had run in the highway of sin. His hands, while he had the use of them, had been stretched forth in deeds of violence; and now that he was nailed to the cross, his doings and goings were at an end. He had used his hands and his feet for the devil, but he had no opportunity of using them for God. If, therefore, salvation were, in any wise, by works, the thief's case was hopeless.

And be it further noted that the thief on the cross knew nothing of the privilege of the great christian ordinances. He was never baptized, and he never received the Lord's Supper, so far as the divine record informs us. This, too, is important. It is not—need we say it?—that we do not value exceedingly both of these precious institutions in their true place. Quite the reverse. So also as to good works; we hold them to be of unquestionable value. God has prepared a path of good works in which His people are to walk continually; and hence if any profess themselves Christians and do not walk in the divinely appointed and prepared path of good works, their profession is hollow and worthless. Mere lip profession is valueless to God

and man ; but where there is divine life in the soul, that life will shew itself in fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

So also as to christian ordinances, the holy scriptures teach us their true place, character, nature, and object. They teach us that baptism—the great initiatory ordinance of Christianity—sets forth, in the most impressive and significant manner, our death to all that in which we stood by nature—death to sin—death to everything in which, as children of the first Adam, we stood. They teach us that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper sets forth the Lord's death, the breaking of His body, the shedding of His blood. Who then could think of penning a single line to touch such institutions as these, or detract from their value? Surely no one who loves Christ or bows to the sovereign authority of His word. It will not, therefore, we trust, be supposed that we undervalue ordinances or good works when we call the reader's attention to the fact that the thief on the cross neither participated in the one nor performed the other. But we do feel there is immense power in this simple fact. There is immense weight in the fact that there is one in heaven, a ransomed spirit present with the Lord, in the bright paradise above, who was never baptized and never received the Lord's Supper, and who never bestowed the weight of a feather in charity. It may be said that, had he lived, he would. No doubt; but he did not, and hence the fact stands forth in all its clearness and telling power to speak in the ears of all who trust in ordinances and good works, if haply they will hear and ponder the precious and all-important truth. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Baptism has its place and its value; but if any were to say to us, "Unless you are baptized, you cannot be saved," we should point them to the thief on the cross, and say, "There is a man who passed into paradise without ever passing under the water

of baptism." So also as to the Lord's Supper, and so as to the entire range of what are called good works. The thief was saved without them. He was saved by grace, by blood, by faith. This cannot possibly be too deeply pondered in this day of busy religiousness and confidence in ordinances. The case of the dying thief is one of commanding interest and unspeakable importance. It stands like a powerful breakwater to stem the tide of ritualism and legal religiousness which is bearing away millions upon its bosom, and hurrying them down to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. The thief was saved without ordinances, and we therefore conclude that ordinances are not essential to salvation; ordinances have their value on earth, but they never brought any one to heaven.

But, then, let us look a little more closely at this marvelous narrative of the dying thief. Did he not, after all, do good works? Yes, verily. He did one of the greatest works that any saved sinner can do. And what was that? *He bore witness to the truth.* True it is that his feet and his hands were nailed to the cross, and were therefore powerless; but his eye, and his heart, and his tongue were free. His eye was free to gaze upon the Son of God; his heart was free to believe in His blessed Person; and his tongue was free to confess His Name in the face of a hostile world. Now to believe on the Son of God, and confess His Name, make up the sum of Christianity. When our Lord, in the days of His flesh, was asked by some, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" His answer was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John vi. 28, 29.) And the inspired apostle declares, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 9, 10.

All this the dying thief, through infinite mercy, did; and had he come down from the cross and lived to the age of Methuselah, he could have done nothing more glorious, nothing more precious to God than what he did during the few moments of His christian life—a life begun, continued, and ended on the cross, so far as this world was concerned, but resumed in that glorious world above, where death can never enter. He bore witness to the truth. This is the grand object of all christian life. A man may be baptized—he may receive the bread and wine of the eucharist hundreds of times—he may scatter thousands in so-called charity—he may bear amongst his fellows the very highest name for morality and religion—he may be a most zealous promoter of all the schemes of philanthropy—he may be and do all this, and yet never having confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus, or believed in his heart that God raised Him from the dead, never be saved. This is a most solemn and weighty consideration in a day like the present when there is so much ado about ordinances, rites, ceremonies, and liturgical services, so much stress laid upon the forms and offices of religion, so much confidence in human authority. Where, we may well enquire, amid all this shall we find the noble confession of the dying malefactor? He confessed “Jesus, Lord.” This is what God looks for. This is what He values. He wants us to own the Lordship of His Son. To all those who trust in their ordinances and their doings, the divine utterance is, “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee.” What He wants is confession to His Son; and this confession of the mouth must flow from the belief of the heart. When Jesus is owned as Lord, everything gets its right place. There may be great weakness and great ignorance, but if the conscience bows to Jesus as Lord, all will come right. I may be so weak as to be only able to eat herbs, and so ignorant as to observe days; or, on the other hand, I may be so strong in the sense of my liberty, as to be able to eat meat,

and so intelligent as not to observe days; but the great moral regulator is the confession of the Lordship of Jesus. This confession the thief rendered. "He said unto Jesus, Lord." He not only owned His spotless, His perfect manhood; but he owned Him as Lord. It is singularly interesting to mark the way in which this precious soul was led on. After having rebuked sin and warned the sinner, in the person of his fellow—after having owned the truth as to himself and his condition, in contrast with that spotless One who hung beside him on the cross, he turns to Jesus, and his whole soul seems absorbed with that peerless object. He seems, as it were, to travel with marvellous rapidity, through all the stages of the "great mystery of godliness," referred to in 1 Timothy iii. 16, of which the foundation is God manifested on earth, and the topstone, Man glorified in heaven. "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Glorious mystery! May we enter more into its profound and wondrous depths!

We do not, of course, undertake to predicate as to the extent or clearness of the thief's apprehensions of all this precious truth; but one thing is plain, he was taught to recognize in Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh." And, further, he was enabled to look through the heavy clouds that gathered around that awful cross, and see the bright beams of glory in the future. "He said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Marvellous fruit of divine teaching! A few moments before he had been reviling the Blessed One: but now he bows in spirit before Him—owns Him as Lord—sees Him to be the God-man—speaks in accents befitting the most mature and calm confidence of a coming kingdom, and finally casts himself upon that almighty grace which shines in the words, "Call upon me

in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (Ps. l. 15.) "*Lord, remember me.*" He forms that mysterious chain of three links. He puts "*Lord*" at one end, "*me*" at the other, and connects them both by that one powerful word "*remember.*" This is salvation. The moment any poor ruined, guilty, self-destroyed sinner becomes linked to the Man who was nailed to the tree, salvation is an eternally settled fact. It matters not who he is or what he is. His sins may be as crimson or as scarlet ; they may be as black as midnight ; they may be multiplied and magnified ; but the moment he becomes linked with a Saviour-God, he is saved in the power of an eternal salvation. His sins and his iniquities are blotted out as a thick cloud, and he is brought to God in all the credit and value of the Name of Jesus.

Thus it was with the dying thief. He found a full, a free, and an eternal salvation on the spot. The Lord Jesus went far beyond all his thoughts and all his desires. He had said, "*Remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.*" The Lord tells him he will do far better for him than that ; "*Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" In these words we have the three grand features of the salvation revealed in the gospel, namely, a present salvation ; a personal salvation ; and a perfect salvation. "*To-day*" — "*shalt thou*" — "*be with me.*" We do not dwell upon these points ; they are familiar to most of our readers ; but we offer one or two remarks as to our Lord's style in this scene.

It is well worthy of notice that there is not one upbraiding word, not a single reference to the past, no allusion to his old habits or to his recent blasphemy or reviling—nothing whatever of this sort. It would not be in keeping with the gracious ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. He saved all who came to Him, or who looked to Him, because He came to do the Father's will, and all that came to Him were drawn of the Father. We do not enter upon the

wide and interesting question of all that is involved in this drawing of the Father—what exercises of soul—what ploughings of conscience—what convictings by the power of the Spirit—what self-emptying, self-loathing, and soul-subduing—what heavings and tossings, ups and downs, hopes and fears. All these things have their special interest; but that which we now desire to press upon the reader is the perfectly unupbraiding grace with which the Lord receives the dying thief.

And it is the same in every case. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." We may remember them, revert to them, be cut to the heart and bowed to the dust by the remembrance; but the moment we come to Jesus, all is blotted out, all forgiven, all forgotten. Such is His grace—such the divine perfection of His work—such the charm of His style. The poor guilty, self-condemned thief is received without a single demur. He casts himself upon Jesus in simple confidence, and the immediate answer is, "*To-day.*" It is as though He had said to him, "You need not wait for the kingdom. You shall taste the joy of being with me long before the glories of the kingdom dawn upon this world. This very day I shall have you with me in that bright paradise above, whither I am going." This, truly, was grace and salvation by grace. "*Thou with me.*" Here is the chain again. The thief had said, "Lord, remember me;" and Jesus answers him by, "Thou with me." The dying Saviour and the dying thief were linked together by a marvellous chain of grace; and, that very day, they were together in paradise. "With me" settled everything. There was nothing to wait for. All was done. Ordinances were not necessary. What ordinances could add aught to the atoning work of Jesus? It was Jesus for the thief on the cross, and therefore it was the thief with Jesus in paradise. Nothing can be simpler. The thief had no plea to urge, no claim, no title. While he had his liberty he lived in sin, and even after he was

nailed to the cross he blasphemed and reviled the Son of God. But the arrow had entered his soul—his eyes had been opened to gaze upon the glorious Person of Jesus the God-man, and to discern the glories of a kingdom in the midst of a scene of shame and degradation—he beheld in that One whom the world had cast out and crucified, a spotless Man, his Lord, and the Possessor of a coming kingdom. He saw, he believed, he testified, and, finally, when the Roman soldiers came to discharge their brutal functions, that saved and happy man had only to say, “Ah! these men are just coming to send me straight to Jesus, my Saviour, and my Lord. All is safe, clear, and bright. I am ready. My Lord has gone before, I have but but to follow. To depart and be with Christ is far better.”

Most gladly could we linger over this wondrous scene; but we must close, and ere we do so, we shall merely leave this one question with the reader, “*Are you saved?*” This is a plain, pointed question; let it receive a plain, pointed answer. Do not put it away, do not give it a half answer. Answer it fully—answer it now, “Are you saved?” If not, let us exhort you solemnly not to put off this most momentous matter, but now, even now, like the dying thief, cast yourself upon Jesus and a full and eternal salvation is yours on the spot. But if you can say, through grace, “Yes, thank God, *I am saved*. I know it, and rejoice in it,” then remember—oh! may we all remember, we are called to own Jesus not only as our Saviour but as our Lord. Let us never separate these two things. If Jesus has saved us, then is He, in very deed, our Lord and Master. His claims upon us — upon all we are, and all we have, are based upon the solid ground of redemption. The basis of our salvation in and through Him, and of His absolute authority over us, is one and the same, namely, His death. He gave himself for us. What a price! What a plea for our entire subjection to His holy authority!

WIDOWHOOD.

IN the Lord's absence, it is according as we feel His absence, that He makes known to us His support. If the Bridegroom be absent, what can the children of the bride-chamber do but fast? What else is their true and befitting attitude in the day in which He is thus, in one sense, "taken away from them?" If we realized this our position better, and felt more the absence of our Lord, we should more easily and happily ally ourselves to that which causes His absence—to His death; for that death, while it is on the one hand, the climax of His rejection from the earth; is on the other, the portal to us of life and glory. And it is according as we enter into the one, that we practically learn the other. It is as we realize the desolation here, which He so deeply tasted of, and which His absence entails on us, that we know the blessing and deliverance which He has secured for us.

There are three orders of desolation or widowhood presented to us in the Gospel of Luke. The first (chap. vii. 11—16) is found at Nain (by interpretation, "beautiful"). The world in itself is beautiful; but at the gate of the city—what a sight! A young man dead—the only son of his mother—and she a widow! To her, however beautiful the place, all hope and light had departed from it. Not only widowed but bereaved of her only son—her last link is severed; the desolation is complete. But what is the resource to her, or to one now similarly desolate? Christ—known in resurrection power; and the very fact of her desolation gives occasion to this knowledge of Him. If she had not been so desolate, she had not known Him thus: how could she? Her widowhood, her desolation becomes a gain to her, for she thereby learns the resources that are in Him. To be a widow of this order is to be with Christ and to know His succour. But unless we take our place as such, we shall not know Him thus. Abraham

took this place in power when he offered up Isaac. Jacob took it when, on his death-bed, he turns, for a moment, from the earthly prospects of others, to the spot where his own were buried; and says, "*as for me*, Rachel died by me, and I buried her in the way of Ephrath," &c. Let the occasion be what it may, whatever brings us into real widowhood, brings us into blessing and likeness to Christ: for it is there that we take His yoke upon us and learn of Him.

The next order of widowhood we find in chapter xviii. Here the desolate one is not even left unmolested. Great as is her desolation and inability to help herself; still she is not without an adversary, and power is in his hand: so that it is not simple desolation, as is that of the first order. But here is one crushed already as a worm and no man, and an enemy at hand wielding his power against her. But what is the resource here? "Will not God avenge His own elect?" We are to pray and not to faint. David at Ziklag was in such a position as this. (1 Sam. xxx.) Widowed of everything; he was also in danger of the adversary; but he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." And the greater his sense of desolation, the greater was his sense afterwards of God's succour to him and the avenging of his enemies.

The third order is in chapter xxi.; and there it is the highest order. The widow answers to her calling; she is spending her all for the testimony of God. It is but two mites—and she might, one would say, have spent them, or *one* of them, on herself; but, no! she will spend it on the temple—the structure of testimony for God on the earth. She is a real widow, and that in the highest sense, for she is not only without expectation, but she has so far forgotten herself, that the little possession left to her she will not expend on herself; but her heart being in the circle of God's interests, she will give it to *Him*, and that *without fear*, but in simple and happy devotion to His interests on

the earth which has no other interest for her. Such an one is a Philadelphian. Though with but "a little strength," he knows the present power of Christ, he is given a power, mouth, and wisdom which all his adversaries cannot gainsay or resist. Not a hair of his head shall perish. Christ will open to him a door that none can shut. Paul in Philippians is a widow of this order. In prison—without an interest in anything here, but what was for Christ's glory. He would spend his all on that. To him "to live was Christ."

It is as we want our blessed Lord that we receive of Him and know Him. May we do so more and more; for what that knowledge brings with it, having it alone can tell.



MEDITATIONS ON THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

"*Thou anointest my head with oil.*" How sweetly conscious the pilgrim is of the Lord's nearness to him! This is the strength of his heart. The honour conferred is great, and may be duly esteemed; but that which the heart loves most, is the presence of the Lord. Comparatively, it matters little who may be at a distance, or even opposed to us, when the Lord is near. In His presence we enjoy a rest from all that surrounds us, which we can find no where else, and which, we doubt not, partakes of the perfect rest above.

Is this, O my soul, thine own experience? Knowest thou the sweet peace and the quiet confidence which conscious nearness to the Lord gives? Surely, those who have experienced the power of that presence in days of weakness and trial, can never forget it. There is a way of learning such things, which neither time nor change of circumstances can efface, and which will be remembered

with profit throughout eternity. But before the Lord teaches thus, the soul must be stripped of all self-dependence, and of everything that has its roots in nature. A destitution must be felt, that looks to the Lord alone, and welcomes the supplies as coming directly from Himself. Then, the arms that enfold the fainting one—the power that raises the stricken one, and the fulness that fills the emptied one, must ever be remembered, and remembered with adoring gratitude.

But may not a soul enjoy great nearness to the Lord, without having passed through trial, or known much of the difficulties of this present life? These, most surely, form no ground, but are often the occasion, of great conscious nearness. It is the happy privilege of all who through grace believe, to enjoy spiritual nearness to God in Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost. This is their birthright. "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." We are not only pardoned, but reconciled. Though, strange to say, I have talked with many who knew their pardon, but were strangers to reconciliation. Such, of course, knew nothing of that personal nearness to Christ of which we are speaking. The sweet, happy, home feeling of reconciliation is unknown.

But why? it may be asked. Because the truth is not fully apprehended. And what is the truth? it may be further asked. As we are merely referring to the fact at present, we cannot go into the subject; but the reception of the prodigal son may be taken as an answer to the question, and as the divine illustration of the doctrine of reconciliation. The first thing the prodigal received from his Father was the kiss of peace—of reconciliation. He is the living picture of a soul quickened, pardoned, sealed, accepted, reconciled, worshipping. Was there one in all the Father's house that felt more at home than the prodigal? Not one. He was there in the full credit of

Christ—radiant in His beauty—exalted in His dignity, and adorned with the jewels of heaven. The Father in His love, we may say, knows not how much to make of him. But how few, alas, drink deeply at the fountain of the Father's love!—a love that is unchangeable, and that is infinitely above robes, and rings, and fatted calves! O Father—Father of the Lord Jesus, give us to know more of the love that so receives, and so welcomes every returning prodigal! O give us to taste of this perfect peace—this perfect reconciliation—this happy, joyous worship!

But may every truly converted sinner now, read in the prodigal's reception the history of his own? He ought to. The Father is not changed. And he may also connect with the love that receives, the love that *seeks*. So that he ought to rejoice in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And with the additional light of the epistles, we see even something more than in that ever fresh, ever precious fifteenth of Luke. The *new ground*, namely, the death and resurrection of Christ, and His exaltation to the right hand of God, is unfolded and expounded in the epistles. This is the entirely new ground on which the believer is placed in *reconciliation* with God. Hence the doctrine so fully taught in the epistles of our *oneness* with Christ, as the risen and exalted Man in glory. There we read that the Christian is *in Christ Jesus—joined unto the Lord—seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. Rom. viii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 17; Eph. ii. 6.

But we return to the question of our experimental nearness to the Lord. True enough, it is our blessed privilege to know our place of nearness to Him, spiritually, and His presence with us, at all times, and under all circumstances; but who can speak of it? Rather let us meditate on the experience of the man of faith, as recorded by the Holy Spirit. Much of the experience of this psalm will apply to Christ Himself, in His path down here, and to those, in all ages, who follow in His footsteps. It is the

path of a godly man, under the eye and the unfailing care of Jehovah. There is suffering and humiliation, honour and glory in the way. The former for a time, the latter for ever.

But however much the Lord may be known and enjoyed in the simplicity of faith, it was by the way of Marah's bitter waters, and the dark shadows of death, that our pilgrim reached the King's table, and became an honoured guest in His banqueting house. It is better that the sufferings should be first and the glory after, than that the glory should be first and the sufferings after.

While the pilgrim is still seated at the table which the Lord prepared for his refreshment, new honours and richer blessings await him. The host, we may say, according to Eastern custom, now rises from his seat, and pours the fragrant oil on the head of his guest. In oriental nations, this is esteemed a mark of the very highest honour, and is usually reserved for distinguished guests and strangers. The oil is mingled with the most costly perfumes, so that the banqueting hall is filled with its sweet odours. It is not unusual, on certain occasions, for the servant to anoint the head of each guest, but when the master himself performs this service on some favoured one, what must *his* honour be! Yet faith can say of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, "Thou anointest my head with oil." No servant is employed on this occasion, the Royal Host takes the place of servant Himself.

It is quite evident from what our Lord says in the house of Simon, that this custom prevailed amongst the Jews: "My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." What self-righteousness so ungraciously withheld, the poor penitent supplied. The Pharisee did not think He was worthy of a little water for His feet, far less the costly oil for His head. But who ever heard of self-righteousness having either oil for the head, water for the feet, or the kiss of gracious

welcome for the lowly Son of man? But the humble penitent finds them all. The fountains of her heart are broken up to bathe His feet with tears. Like a man, who once said to the writer, after the word had reached his heart, and who could scarcely speak from emotion, "I seem to have got a well in my heart, and it is constantly springing up to my head." This woman, too, found a well—a springing well in her heart; and also the means of finding the costly ointment, and every other tribute of respect for the Saviour of her soul. Oh! what a scene! what a lesson! A poor, fallen, degraded sinner—an outward breaker of the law, enters the abode of man's righteousness, bows at the feet of the Son of David, and carries off the blessing in the very face, and from the very centre of the Pharisee's vain glory. She is enriched with the noblest prize that soul ever found, while the chiefs of the people, who refused to bow to Jesus, are left poor and miserable, and blind and naked. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The practice of anointing is frequently spoken of in Scripture. The holy oil was largely used in the Jewish worship. Their prophets, priests, and kings, were consecrated, and inaugurated with it. It formed an important ingredient in the offerings; even the vessels of the tabernacle were to be anointed with the "holy anointing oil." As compounded according to divine directions (Ex. xxx.), it was, no doubt, an expressive type of the Holy Spirit in His many and various operations; and its noiseless flow through the golden pipes, (Zech. iv.,) may represent His silent, unseen working in the soul.

But the anointing of the head, as in our beautiful psalm, is more the emblem of a personal blessing, than of a ceremonial observance. The man of God, in the beginning of the psalm, under the similitude of the sheep and its shepherd, speaks of his perfect confidence in Jehovah; and

that confidence never fails him ; it characterizes the psalm. "The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want." He is led forth by his shepherd's hand to the green pastures, and beside the still waters. But a day comes when a dark cloud passes over the whole scene. He goes through sorrow and suffering, though the hand that strikes be unseen. Death crosses his path and leaves its dark shadows behind. The once joyous, peaceful, happy scene is turned into a vale of tears. Still, the Lord is there, and His presence is enjoyed. "Thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And now the figure is changed — changed from the emblem of a sheep confiding in a shepherd, to an invited guest at the King's entertainment.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies ; thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over." The "table," may be the symbol of the soul's communion with the Lord Himself. It may be employed here to set forth a richer, fuller character of communion with Him. As He says elsewhere, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii. 20.

The anointing of the head, seems to partake more of an open, public expression of the Lord's favour ; and in this distinguishing blessing, the anointed one is brought into blessed fellowship with the Master Himself. He was anointed, not with the oil of the sanctuary, but with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water ; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." (Matt. iii. 16.) We elsewhere read, that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." And again, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed

thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Acts x. 38; Heb. i. 9.

Most marvellous indeed is the blessing to our souls that shines under the emblem of anointing. Here we are said to be the "*fellows*" of Christ; and as man, we know, He is addressed as the "*fellow*" of the Jehovah of hosts! (Zech. xiii.) What a link! thou mayest well exclaim, O my soul, what a link between us and the living God! It is also said of all Christians, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One." And that, "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." (1 John ii. 20; 2 Cor. i. 21.) True, most true, He is anointed with the oil of gladness *above* his "*fellows*;" still, we *are* His "*fellows*." The Spirit of truth affirms it, we believe it, and the day will declare it.

As the anointed kings and priests of our God and Father, we shall, ere long, be associated with our blessed Lord, in His dominion and glory. We shall then be the public companions of Him, under whose hand will be the whole government of the heavens and the earth. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. xx.) But let it not be thought that our reigning, or companionship with Christ, terminates with the thousand years. True, that will be the end of the time-period of the reign; and then Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. xv.) But our reigning with Christ will just be, as it were, commencing then; for we "*shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*" (Rom. v. 17.) Our eternal life, and our reign with Christ, are co-equal.

Blessed Lord! what love! what a prospect! what can we say? O give us to walk worthy of the holy oil of our God that is upon us! Meantime, we can only worship

and adore in the presence of such grace. In truth we may say, "*My cup runneth over.*"

"HAIL, to the Lord's Anointed! Great David's greater Son:
When to the time appointed, the rolling years have run,
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
To take away transgression, and rule in equity.

* * * * *

For Him shall praise unceasing, and daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing—a kingdom without end.
The tide of time shall never His covenant remove;
His name shall stand for ever, His great best name of love."



THE TWO-FOLD WAY OF GOD.

(Psa. lxxvii. 13. 19.)

HIS way is "in the sanctuary," and His way is "in the sea." Now there is a great difference between these two things. First of all, God's way is in the sanctuary, where all is light, all is clear. There is no mistake there. There is nothing, in the least degree, that is a harass to the spirit. On the contrary, it is when the poor troubled one enters into the sanctuary, and views things there in the light of God, that he sees the end of all else—everything that is entangled, the end of which he cannot find on the earth.

We have the same thing in Ps. lxxiii. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me: until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." That is, in the sanctuary of God, everything is understood; no matter how difficult, and trying, and painful, as regards ourselves or others. When we once enter there, we are in the place of God's light, and God's love; and then, whatever the difficulty may be, we understand all about it.

But not only is God's way in the sanctuary (and when we are there, all is bright and happy); but God's way is in the sea. He walks where we cannot always trace His

footsteps. God moves mysteriously by times, as we all know. There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. I need not say that it is not at all as if God had pleasure in our perplexities. Nor is it as if we had no sanctuary to draw near to, where we can rise above it. But, still, there is a great deal in the ways of God that must be left entirely in His own hands. The way of God is thus not only in the sanctuary, but also in the sea. And yet, what we find even in connection with His footsteps being in the sea is, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." That was through the sea: afterwards, it was through the wilderness. But it had been through the sea. The beginnings of the ways of God with His people were there; because, from first to last, God must be the confidence of the saint. It may be an early lesson of his soul, but it never ceases to be the thing to learn. How happy to know that, while the sanctuary is open to us, yet God Himself is nearer still—and to Him we are brought now. As it is said, (1 Pet. iii.,) "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust to bring us to God." This is a most precious thing; because there we are in the sanctuary at once, and brought to God Himself. And I am bold to say, that heaven itself would be but a small matter if it were not to God that we are brought. It is better than any freedom from trial—better than any blessing, to be in the presence of the One we belong to; who is Himself the source of all blessing and joy. That we are brought to Him now is infinitely precious. There we are in the sanctuary brought to God. But, still, there are other ways of God outside the sanctuary—in the sea. And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then they are not known. But confidence in God Himself is always the strength of faith. May the Lord grant us increasing simplicity and quietness in the midst of all that we pass through, for His name's sake.

A VOICE FROM HEAVEN:

Anticipating Resurrection-Glory.

I SHINE in the light of God ;
 His likeness stamps my brow ;
 Through the valley of death my feet have trod,
 And I reign in glory now !

No breaking heart is here,
 No keen and thrilling pain,
 No wasted cheek, where the frequent tear
 Hath roll'd and left its stain.

I have reached the joys of heaven :
 I am one of the sainted band ;
 To my head a crown of gold is given,
 And a harp is in my hand.

I have learnt the song they sing,
 Whom Jesus has set free,
 And the glorious walls of Heaven still ring
 With my new-born melody.

Oh ! friends of mortal years,
 The trusted and the true !
 Ye are watching still in the valley of tears,
 But I wait to welcome you.

Do I forget ? oh, no !
 For memory's golden chain,
 Shall bind *my* heart to the hearts below
 Till they meet to touch again.

Each link is strong and bright ;
 And love's electric chain,
 Flows freely down like a river of light,
 To the world from whence it came.

Do you mourn when another star
 Shines out from the glittering sky ?
 Do you weep when the raging voice of war,
 And the storms of conflict die ?

Then why should your tears run down,
 And your hearts be sorely riven,
 For another gem in the Saviour's crown,
 And another soul in Heaven ?

JESUS, A DELIVERER AND LORD.

(Read Mark v.)

IN the fifth chapter of Mark, we have three distinct cases of human need presented to our view, namely, the man with the legion; the woman with the issue; and the ruler's daughter—three distinct aspects of man's condition, all perfectly met by the gracious ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and all setting Him forth as a Deliverer and Lord. Let us meditate a little on these cases, and may the Spirit of God enable us to understand and profit by them! And, first, we shall look at

THE DEMONIAK.

Here we have man presented to us as under the direct power of Satan. This is a very solemn phase of man's condition, and one not sufficiently pondered—not understood. Hundreds might read the opening paragraph of our chapter, and not see therein portrayed the real state of man as such. They might feel disposed to pass it over as a narrative of a poor demoniac, having no possible application to them, inasmuch as they are not possessed by a legion of devils. But then it must be remembered that sin has given Satan direct power over man. This is a most weighty fact, and one most needful to have pressed upon the attention of men at a moment like the present, when there is so much confidence in human powers, so much boasting of the human will, such strong assertion as to human liberty. In the midst of all this, it is well to declare plainly that man in his natural state is simply the slave of Satan, led captive by him at his will. This captivity may be variously exhibited, for Satan has various means, various agencies, various influences, wherewith to act upon men. He rules some by their lusts, some by pleasure, some by ambition, some by their intellectual tastes and pursuits; but he rules all in some way or another. This cannot be disputed. Men may seek to deny it, they may

succeed in forgetting it ; but that in no-wise alters the fact. Man is the slave of Satan. Sin has made him such, nor can he, by aught within his range, snap the chain of his bondage. Satan may allow man to think himself free, inasmuch as he allows him to gratify his lusts, and enjoy his pleasures, and to cultivate his tastes ; but he hides from his view the humiliating and melancholy fact, that these very things are the chains and fetters of his captivity.

But we may be asked for direct authority for asserting, thus boldly, that man, in his unrenewed state, is the slave of Satan—our right to regard the demoniac as a sample of all mankind may be called in question. It may, very legitimately, be asked, “ Does the word of God directly teach that man is under the absolute dominion of Satan ? ” Most assuredly it does. Take the following passage, “ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” (Eph. ii. 1—3.) Here we are taught that Satan works in the children of disobedience, and that he is “ the prince of the power of the air.” So also, in the fourth chapter of Second Corinthians, Satan is called “ the god of this world,” and he is there represented as “ blinding the minds of them which believe not.” Many other passages of Holy Scripture might be adduced, but these are amply sufficient to prove that man, in his unregenerate state, is under the power of Satan, that he is not his own master at all ; but is under the absolute control of the archenemy of God. It is of no possible use for men to speak of being free, to boast themselves in their liberty of thought, of feeling, and of action. There are but two masters ; and the reader is, at this

moment, under the authority of either the one or the other. Hence it follows that we are warranted in viewing the poor demoniac as a sample of man's real condition, by nature. It is, no doubt, most humiliating to those who are wont to say, "Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" It may prove very unpalatable to those who deem themselves as free as the air—free to think, free to speak, free to act, according to the dictates of their own will—to be told that they are slaves, that they are in bondage, that they are led captive by another. But it is true notwithstanding, and we press the truth upon the reader, whatever be his condition. If he be unconverted, we press it, in order that his eyes may be opened to see his true state; and if he be converted, we press it, in order that he may be stirred up to feel for those who are yet held in the crushing bondage of the great enemy of God and man.

But let us look, particularly, at this touching narrative of the poor demoniac, so vividly illustrative of man's condition and of Christ's delivering grace. If we fail to see these two things in the picture, we shall miss one of the finest lessons in the volume of inspiration. "And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

Now, we must ever remember that, in reading the narratives of the New Testament, we have not merely inspired records of what actually occurred, but great principles of action, types of character, living illustrations of human nature, and of the world. Mighty moral truths,

which shall have their application in all ages of man's history, and in all stages of man's condition. It is of the utmost importance that we should take this large and comprehensive view of Holy Scripture, else we shall come to regard the inspired Volume merely as the book of one age, instead of the book for all ages.

What, then, are we to learn from this account of the demoniac? Has it any voice, any lesson for us? Unquestionably. It shows us plainly what it is to be under the power of Satan—what is the state and what the occupation of all those who are led captive by that false and cruel master. It holds up to our view a glowing picture of the habits, ways, pursuits, and moral condition of all those who are yet in the grasp of that great spiritual slaveholder. It tells us where they are, and what they are doing. Their dwelling is in the place of death, and their occupation, "cutting themselves with stones." Thus it is, beloved reader, with man, under the hand of Satan. True it is, that people do not and will not see this; it is quite too humbling for them. But, ah! it is most salutary, and, therefore, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, we must press upon their attention the solemn fact that they are under the power of Satan—in the place of death, and bent on self-destruction. Look at the drunkard, look at the votary of fashion, look at the pleasure-seeker, look at the man of the turf and the sportsman, look at those who throng the ball-room and the theatre, and come forth, morning after morning, pale, jaded, and exhausted from those scenes of revelry and folly. What are all these doing but "cutting themselves with stones," of one kind or another? Nor need we, by any means, confine ourselves to such as we have named; but look at the money-lover, look at the aspirant after literary fame, look at the eager politician, look at the slave of ambition, and what do we see, but so many, like the demoniac, "cutting themselves with stones?" Oh! that men would

but open their eyes to see this—that they would but see how it is with them—that they would be convinced of the truth as to their condition, as viewed in the light which the word of God throws upon it.

And, be it noted carefully, that, “No man could bind him, no, not with chains.” The moral reformer and the philanthropist may, with the purest and loftiest intentions, and with the most benevolent designs, seek to ameliorate man’s condition, to restrain his vices, to correct his evil habits. He may employ all the agencies and influences within his reach to improve, to elevate, and to polish; but, in the end, it will be found, that it is not within the compass of man’s ability to rescue his fellow from the power of Satan until that power is broken by the hand of the Son of God. We desire not to be misunderstood. We would not pen a single line to detract from the value of philanthropy and moral reform, so far as they go. Still less should we think of undervaluing the motives of the philanthropist or the moral reformer. No; we only want *them to take a higher stand—a wider range, and to work with another lever altogether.* We want them to see that they must make the cross of Jesus the basis of their operations, else their efforts will fail, and their labours end in disappointment. Mere moral reform, however desirable in a social point of view, will leave man still in the grasp of Satan, whereas what is really needed is full deliverance from that terrible grasp by the commanding voice of the Son of God.

But it will be said, “Must we not endeavour to prepare men for the reception of the gospel? Is not a moral preparedness necessary? How, for example, can a drunken man receive the gospel? Must we not first make him sober, and then give him the gospel?” To all this we reply very briefly and very simply: the cross is the grand and all-sufficient remedy for man in every possible condition in which he can be found, under the hand of Satan. Until that remedy is applied, man is still the slave of

Satan. It is, of course, obvious—so obvious as not to need a second thought—that there is no use in preaching the gospel to a man in a state of intoxication. But is there not just as little use in preaching moral reform? Surely he can no more understand the one than the other. And let us ask, What preparedness had the wretched demoniac to come to Jesus? Had the fetters and chains prepared him? Had man's efforts to tame him fitted him, in any-wise, for the ministry of the great Deliverer? The answer is, "No man could bind him. . . . neither could any man tame him." His case was entirely beyond the reach of his fellow; but it was not beyond the reach of the Son of God; and that blessed One needed no evidences of moral reform to draw His loving heart toward the miserable victim of Satan's power. It was quite sufficient for Him that there was real need. He came down into this world, not to seek and to save those who were able to reform themselves, but these who were *lost*; and, further, He came not merely to *reform* them, but to *save* them. This makes a material difference. It is salvation we want and not merely moral reform; and this salvation is sent to man in the very condition in which he is. "The salvation of God is *sent* unto the Gentiles." "This day is salvation *come* to this house." "The grace of God that *bringeth* salvation unto all men hath appeared." In the case of the demoniac, it was when all human efforts had proved futile—when it had been made apparent that no man could either bind his body or tame his spirit—it was then the divine and gracious Deliverer entered the scene, to rescue him from the hand of his cruel master.

And, be it observed, that this wondrous deliverance had to be, as it were, forced upon the man. He did not want to have aught to do with Jesus. So completely was he under the power of Satan that, though there was the forced expression of homage, "He cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou

torment me not." All this only tends to throw out into full relief the marvellous grace of Jesus. He beheld the poor demoniac under the thralldom of the great enemy of God and man, who led him captive at his will, who made him do what he would, and say what he would; and He, the "stronger man," came upon the "strong," and spoiled his goods. He delivered the prey from the hand of the mighty, and set the captive free. By His authoritative voice He dispossessed the enemy, and, without any fetters or chains, save those mysterious, mighty, moral chains of love, He bound the demoniac to Himself. Blessed, adorable, gracious Lord Jesus! Who would not love thee? Who would not adore and worship thee? Who would not confide in thee? May our hearts go forth to thee in true devotedness, as our Deliverer and our Lord!

Let us now turn, for a moment, and gaze on the picture presented to us in the delivered captive at the feet of his Deliverer. There he sat, "clothed and in his right mind," at the feet of Jesus. What a change from the fierce, wild, ungovernable victim of Satan's terrible power! What a contrast between the naked inhabitant of the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones, and the calm, subdued, happy subject of divine grace sitting at the feet of Jesus, and gazing up into the face of his divine Deliverer! Can anything be more morally lovely? And yet it is only what ought to be seen in the case of every truly converted soul. For what is conversion? It is deliverance from the power of Satan. But to what am I delivered? Am I merely delivered from the power of Satan to be my own master? Alas! that would be a poor deliverance. No; I am delivered from the bondage of Satan to be "the slave of Jesus Christ." Yes, reader, let not the word startle you or offend your moral sense. We do not like the term slave or slavery. It clashes with our modern notions of freedom. But, ah! it all depends on who is our master. There is equal truth and beauty in those words, "The service of

the Lord is perfect freedom." Most true—most lovely! "Perfect freedom!" Yes, verily. The service of Satan, in all its departments, is perfect bondage—deep, dark, and degrading bondage, however varied its chains. But the blessed service of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is perfect freedom—pure, enlightened, and elevated freedom.

It is very important that Christians should be instructed in the truth of the Lordship of Christ. We fear it is little understood or entered into. We ventured to touch upon it at the close of our paper on the dying thief; but it presents itself to our notice on almost every page of the New Testament. "God has made Jesus both *Lord* and Christ." "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be *Lord* both of the dead and living." (Rom. xiv. 9.) "Jesus Christ, our *Lord*, both theirs and ours." (1 Cor. i. 2.) "Ye serve the *Lord* Christ." Col. iii. 24.

Now, dear christian reader, we are called to give our serious attention to this truth. We live in a day of widespread evangelical profession. If you look around, and examine the elements that are at work in the world, you will find three very distinct things. You will find infidelity, superstition, and evangelical profession. Infidelity is making far more rapid progress than we are at all aware of. It is secretly sapping the foundations of thought and feeling, throughout the whole civilized world. In numberless cases where there is the outward semblance of reverence for sacred things, there is, underneath, a sceptical influence at work, which only waits for the suited occasion to burst forth in overwhelming force, and carry away the feeble embankments which education and social influence have erected. In many cases, it is painfully apparent, how little reverence there is for the Bible or sacred things on the part of the young people growing up around us. If we look back over the history of the last quarter of a century, we cannot but see a marked and melancholy change in this respect. There *was* an outward respect, at least, for the word of God, sufficient to make men shrink

with a sort of horror from any one who could dare to broach infidel or sceptical notions. Even that feeling is rapidly passing away. Thousands and tens of thousands now listen, with cold indifference, if not with a secret feeling of approval, to bold infidel attacks upon the sacred volume. All this, with much more that might be named, marks the appalling progress of infidelity. Professedly christian teachers are not ashamed or afraid to call in question the authenticity of Holy Scripture. Every new attack upon the Bible, every new assault upon Christianity, is received with a growing interest by millions of professing Christians throughout Europe and America. Every new theory which seems at all likely to furnish materials for an attack upon divine revelation, or its divine Author is swallowed with avidity.

We cannot shut our eyes to these solemn facts, and we dare not withhold them from our readers. These lines, which we are penning in England, may be read by persons in the bush in Australia and New Zealand, or in the backwoods of America; and these persons may be casting many a longing look, and sending many a deep-drawn sigh across the ocean, to this highly-favoured land, and drawing a contrast between the light which shines here and the darkness that reigns there. Well, we can and do bless God for our many privileges—we praise Him for the inestimable blessing of civil and religious liberty—we praise Him for an open Bible and a free gospel—we praise Him for thousands of souls turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God—we praise Him for thousands of hearts devoted to the Name and cause of Jesus—we praise Him for the magnificent wave of blessing which has, within the last seven years, rolled over America and Europe. For all these things we heartily bless His name; but, notwithstanding all this, the solemn fact presses upon the heart, that infidelity is making rapid strides in England, on the continent of Europe, and throughout the length and breadth of the New World.

Then, as to superstition, in all its forms, can any one fail to mark its progress? What a growing confidence in ordinances! What attention to the outward forms and ceremonies of ritualism! What a clinging to human authority! What reverence for tradition! What earnest cravings after antiquity! What thirst for the attraction of music, painting, sculpture, and architecture, in the so-called service and worship of God! What do all these things indicate? In what direction are they leading souls? Of what are they the symptoms? Let the thoughtful reader answer.

But, let us enquire, what is there in the professing Church to stand against this rapidly rising tide of infidelity and superstition? A feeble, meagre, shallow evangelicalism—an easy, worldly, self-indulgent evangelical profession—a *kind* of gospel—a gospel diluted—a gospel shorn of its strength, its majesty, and its glory—a gospel deprived of its edge, its point, and its pungency—a gospel which, in many cases, seeks to persuade the sinner that God—we speak with all reverence—will be very much obliged to him for accepting salvation—a gospel which will not suffer the word “*responsibility*” to fall upon the ear of the professor, and will not admit of any such thing as the *claims* of the Lordship of Christ. According to the teaching of this so-called gospel, the very mention of duties, claims, and responsibilities, savours of legality. The conscience is not to be addressed. No warning voice must be heard, lest it should lead souls to question *their* interest in Christ—lest it should disturb their peace. Christ’s interest in His people is of little moment, compared with their interest in Him!

Reader, be thou well assured of it, this will never do. We want something quite different. We want a gospel which links together, by one indissoluble bond, these two words, “SAVIOUR and LORD.” We want, like the rescued demoniac, to take our place at the feet of that Blessed One who is, at once, our Deliverer and our Master.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

MEDITATIONS
ON THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

“*My cup runneth over.*” What a happy state to be in! The blessing of the King’s guest is now *unmeasured*. He who was, a little while ago, amidst the deepest shades of the valley, is now in the scene of highest joy, and receiving the most public assurance of the Lord’s favour. Nevertheless, we must not forget, that the valley may be as strong an expression of the Lord’s favour as the banquet, though the results in experience be so widely different. Now, the cup of joy is flowing over. But this joy is only in the Lord. The whole scene below may be as joyless as ever. These two things are perfectly consistent in christian experience, and well known to many. Earth’s scenes may henceforth be joyless, though full of mercies, while the heart is in the boundless joys of the Lord. Everything around may be tinged with the dark shade of disappointment, bereavement; or with the most crushing, abiding trial; while all above is calm, cloudless, unmingled joy—standing before God in the full credit of Christ, and in the sweet confidence that we are the children whom He loves, the heart overflows with joyous praise.

This is the genuine fruit, O my soul, of being at the King’s entertainment. But how could it be otherwise? Seated at the King’s table—partaking of the repast which His own hand had dressed—the head anointed with the odoriferous oil—the cup filled to overflowing with the King’s choicest wine; what else, tell me, could a soul say in such circumstances, than “*my cup runneth over?*”—my joy—my blessing—my happiness, is full—yea, more than full; I can only love and praise.

From this expressive image thou mayest learn, O my soul, what *worship* is. And rest assured, that nothing is of more importance to the Christian, and nothing more

honouring to God. He is robbed of His glory when His children fail to worship Him. The true principle and character of worship are seen here. How full and instructive is this remarkable Psalm! And in how many points it applies to the blessed Lord Himself. Oh! how full was His cup of joy, and of sorrow too, when down here as the dependent Man, confiding in Jehovah's care! But what wonderful experience for a sinner saved by grace to be able to say, when in deep, deep waters, "My cup of joy is full, my cup of sorrow too." Such was always the portion of the Lord's cup, as the Man of sorrows. But He knew both perfectly. What a blessing to have fellowship with Him! What a privilege, however painful for the present, to taste His cup of sorrow, as well as His cup of joy—to know something of His earthly sorrows, and of His heavenly joys; of the cup of wrath, which He drank for us, we can never taste. "It is finished." It is drained to its dregs. But of His cup of joy we shall drink for ever; Hallelujah! "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," will be His welcome greeting by and by. Not merely, observe, my soul, into the joy of heaven, or of angels, but into the joy of thy Lord.

"We adore thee evermore; Hallelujah!
 Saviour, for thy boundless grace; Hallelujah!
 For the cross, whereby to us, Hallelujah!
 Sure is made eternal bliss; Hallelujah!
 From sin's cruel slavery; Hallelujah!
 For thine all-atoning blood, Hallelujah!
 Which hath brought us nigh to God; Hallelujah!"

What, then, thou mayest still enquire, O my soul, is the spiritual meaning of this emblem? We believe it represents a soul in the true spirit and act of worshipping. We know no other four words in Scripture, which so emphatically express

THE TRUE IDEA OF WORSHIP.

The Master has so filled the vessel that it overflows. When the heart is filled with the truth, "as the truth is in Jesus," and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it overflows in thanksgiving and praise—it worships God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. The heart of the guest, we may say, responds to the kindness of the host. But, plainly, that which comes down from God to the soul in grace, reascends from the soul to Him in grateful praise. Like the curling smoke from the golden altar, it ascends in the sweet odours of acceptable worship.

It is perfectly clear that a cup running over can hold no more; that which is poured in only increases its overflow. But what, may I ask, are the spiritual feelings of a soul that answers to this figure? They are heavenly in their character, and produced by the Holy Spirit. Nothing on earth comes so near the employment of heaven as worship. It will be our happy employment throughout eternity. But the soul must, in spirit, be in heaven—in the Holy of holies, before it reaches this condition, and that is where the Christian should always be. He is in Christ, and Christ fills all heaven with His glory. In God's account there is no outer-court worship now; it must be priestly and inside the veil. When the heart of the worshipper answers to the overflowing cup, it is evidently completely filled up—not a corner is left empty. This is the main thought. It feels, spiritually, that every wish is met—every desire is satisfied, and all the longings of the soul perfectly answered. True, the worshipper is not yet in resurrection glory, but he knows and feels that he has everything excepting glory. *That* he waits for, but not uncertainly. "For we 'through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. v. 5.) The *hope* which properly belongs to righteousness is *glory*. We have the righteousness now, in Christ, we wait for the glory. And

yet in another sense we have the glory too, as the Lord Himself says, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them." And even in a still closer way we may say that we have it now, according to what the apostle says to the Colossians; "Which is Christ *in you* the hope of glory." Here it may be said that we are already *linked* with the glory. "Christ in you the hope of glory." But we wait for the glory of God in *full manifestation*.

It may be well to notice the difference between *prayer* and *worship*, however nearly allied they may be to each other, and even suitably mingled together, as "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks." We have always much to be thankful for; still, the two things, in themselves, are quite distinct. We bring our *empty* cups to the prayer-meeting, and beg and beseech our God and Father to fill them. This shews our knowledge of God, and our confidence in Him; and if we pray in faith the oil may flow until every vessel is filled. (2 Kings iv.) Thus, prayer may lead to worship, as preaching the gospel to the world, and teaching God's people, may do. Nevertheless, it is well to understand the difference between prayer, preaching, teaching, and worship. They are each most important in themselves, and all of God, and ought not to be confounded. In the preaching of the gospel, God is addressing the world; in teaching, He is speaking to His saints; but in worship we address God—we render adoration to Him. Ministry is from God to man, worship is from man to God. Hardly any two things could be more distinct, and yet the distinction is rarely seen. True worship may be produced by any of the three named services, and even a spirit of worship may be enjoyed when engaged in them, and so much the better when it is so; but in christian worship we draw near to God as our Father in Christ Jesus, and address ourselves to Him. When we know God as He has revealed Himself in the Person and work of Christ, we

have holy liberty in His presence, and render the praise, adoration, and thanksgiving of an overflowing heart.

The term "cup" is frequently and variously used in Scripture: sometimes it is the symbol of joy, and sometimes of sorrow; but in the verse before us, the "cup running over" is the expression of overflowing joy, and is in full harmony with the position of the anointed believer. The table, which Jehovah had prepared for His weary pilgrim, more than supplied all his need. Nothing was wanting. The provision was full, and divinely suited to his condition. There was no need to remind the Host of something that had been forgotten. Asking for this, or for that, at such a table, would be contrary to every feeling of the satisfied guest; unless it were, in heart, for more gratitude—more suited thanksgiving. Ought we not to be filled with this spirit when at the Lord's Supper? Most surely, and in the highest sense. May we not at least say, that, in this beautiful verse, we have an *illustration* of the Lord's Supper; the presence of the Holy Spirit; and the worship of the assembly of God? Surely we may, for the idea of worship is more in connection with the assembly, than with a single Christian. The joy of others increases our joy, and strengthens our worship.

This truth is so beautifully and touchingly set before us in Deuteronomy xxvi., that we must notice it. The worshipper already in the land promised to the fathers, brings his basket of first-fruits—the growth of the holy land; and the priest presents it before the Lord his God. He worships *in the land*, and only presents to Jehovah *the fruits of the land*. Canaan is the type of heaven, and we can only worship God, when there, in spirit, and with the growth of that happy land. Love, joy, holiness, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, grow abundantly in our heavenly Canaan. But the joy of the redeemed Israelite in the land was shared with others. He did not forget his own once miserable condition in the land of Egypt, though

now redeemed out of it. "A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt." In his new joy, he invites the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, to share his abundance. But this was not all; he maintained a walk of practical holiness, without which there can be no worship. "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away aught thereof for any unclean use, nor given aught thereof for the dead, but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me." And now in the largeness of his heart he embraces all Israel. "Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey." True benevolence, largeness of heart, is sure to accompany a spirit of heavenly worship. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

The sacrifice of Christ, which is commemorated in the breaking of bread, is the only *foundation* of true worship; and the Holy Spirit present in the assembly is the alone *power* by which God can be worshipped acceptably. It would be the most daring presumption for any one to draw near to God as a worshipper, unless he knew that all his guilt was removed, and that he was a new creature in Christ Jesus. But when we know that the blessed Lord, by the blood of His cross, has fully glorified God, blotted out all our sins, and cleansed us from all defilement, we have holy boldness to draw near to God as our Father. But for the cross, all must be judgment; but by means of the cross, all is grace, boundless grace. The rending of the veil from the top to the bottom, is the divine witness to us, that Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and opened

up the way for us into the Holiest of all. In virtue of His atoning sacrifice, there is now, glory be to God, no question of sin between the worshipper and God. That question was fully gone into on the cross, and there settled—there closed for ever. The same stroke, which slew the Lamb, rent the veil, and laid open the way into the presence of infinite holiness, where the worshipper now stands without spot, and rejoices before the Lord His God.

Still meditate, O my soul, for the deepening and the elevating of thy worship, on that wondrous cross—the great centre of God's moral universe! To this centre God ever pointed, and the eye of faith ever looked forward, until the Saviour came. And now we must ever turn to that cross as the centre of all our blessing, and the basis of all our worship, both on earth and in heaven—in time and throughout all eternity. The "new song" never could have been sung in heaven, and no hymn of praise could ever have been sung on earth, by fallen man, but for the cross of Jesus; and, but for that same cross, ours must have been for ever a cup of trembling, in place of an overflowing cup of rejoicing.

“ O what a debt I owe to Him who shed His blood,
And cleansed my soul, and gave me power to stand before
His God.

Saviour and Lord! I own the riches of Thy grace;
For I can call Thy God, my God—can bow before His face.
Thy heavenly Father, too, I worship as my own,
Who gave with Thee the Spirit's cry, to me a son foreknown.”

Having briefly dwelt in our meditations on the only *foundation* of worship—the sacrifice of Christ; we will now refer to the only *power* of worship—the Holy Spirit. When "born again" we receive a new nature, which is holy and suited to the presence of God. It is also capable of enjoying Him, which truth surely gives us the highest thought of creature-happiness; and yet, as the apostle

says, that blessed state may be enjoyed even now. "But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 11.) Without this new nature there could be no worship. It is the *children* that the Father seeks to worship Him. Sonship is essential to worship. But the Father delights in the worship of His children. Not only does He accept it, but He *seeks it*. Wondrous, gracious truth, O my soul! our God and Father *seeking* worshippers! "For the Father seeketh such to worship him."

But, besides the accomplished work of redemption, the new birth, and our union with the risen Christ, the *gift of the Holy Spirit* is indispensable to christian worship. Nothing can be plainer than our Lord's own teaching to the woman of Samaria on this subject. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth." Here our Lord insists on the moral necessity of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in christian worship. And surely He knows best what suits the Father, from whose bosom He came, and even then He was "in the bosom of the Father." (John i. 18.) It is by the Spirit, though children of God, that we understand, enjoy, and worship Him. God being a Spirit, He must be worshipped in His own nature—"in Spirit." A son is the same nature as his father.

As children, we are feeble and dependent, but we are "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." As children, we are ignorant and foolish, but the Holy Spirit communicates to us the mind of God, and gives us an understanding in divine things, so that we can draw near to Him in thought and feeling suited to His holy presence. It is the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, that gives us the *consciousness* of our oneness with Christ, and our nearness to God. He is the seal of redemption, and

the earnest of the inheritance. The anointing of the head with oil, is like "*the unction*" that we receive of God whereby we may know all things. (See 1 John ii. 20; 1 Cor. ii. 12.) And it is by the same Spirit that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, (Rom. v. 5,) which love, we may say, is the source of all our blessing, and the spring of all our worship. If, then, the Holy Spirit be thus absolutely necessary to the worship of Christians, surely it becomes a matter of first importance, that He should have His right place in the assemblies of the saints. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 13.) How can we render to God the glory due unto His name, if the Spirit, by any means, be quenched, or practically displaced? This is a solemn question. Would not the contrast, so strongly drawn by the apostle, be in some way applicable in such a case? For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 3.

Here, it is not the *sin* of the flesh, but the *religion* of the flesh, which the apostle warns against. In God's sight the one is as bad as the other. The true worshippers are known by worshipping God in the Spirit, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. The flesh can be very pious in its own way, and be largely occupied with good works; but it will never "rejoice in Christ Jesus." It knows nothing of Christ as despised on earth, and honoured in heaven; nor of setting our affections on things above. But even when Christ has His right place in the heart, and the Holy Spirit owned as the alone power of worship, we have need to watch against mingling the thoughts of the flesh with the guidance of the Spirit. It will be the constant aim of the enemy, where he cannot substitute flesh for Spirit, to mingle the two.

One solemn question—one grand test, remains for each—

for all : *Do I rejoice in Christ Jesus alone?* This is the true standard to judge by—the touchstone of spiritual worship. Answerest thou, O my soul, to this standard? Is Christ thy all in all? Comest thou before God—standest thou in His holy presence—*rejoicing in Christ Jesus alone?* He is the delight of the Father's heart—the object of the Spirit's testimony—the joy and glory of His people. Happy, thrice happy they, who, in this day of wide-spread fleshly pietism, “Worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

“O God, we come with singing, because Thy Great High Priest
Our names to Thee is bringing, nor e'er forgets the least :
For us He wears the mitre, where 'Holiness' shines bright ;
For us His robes are whiter than heaven's unsullied light.”



“ I WILL FEAR NO EVIL.”

In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear,
And safe in such confiding, for nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?

Wherever He may guide me, no want shall turn me back ;
My Shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack.
His wisdom ever waketh, His sight is never dim,
He knows the way He taketh, and I will walk with Him.

Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen ;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me, where the dark clouds have
been.

My hope I cannot measure ; my path to life is free ;
My Saviour has my treasure, and He will walk with me.

A. L. W.

JESUS, A DELIVERER AND LORD.

(PART II.)

THE more deeply we ponder the present condition of things, the more convinced are we that the only place of true security is at the feet of Jesus, our Deliverer and our Lord. We live in a dark and evil day. Yes; dark and evil must we call the moment in which our lot is cast; and that, too, notwithstanding the light of so-called science, the boasted progress of civilization, the noble schemes of philanthropy, the mighty achievements of religious societies, and the soul-stirring records of the leading religious journals of the day. We have no desire whatever to make little of all the good that is being done. Quite the contrary. We have in the former part of this paper given expression to our deep and heartfelt thankfulness for all that God is doing throughout the harvest-field, as well as in the midst of His Church, and in the hearts of His people individually. Yet, with the eye resting on all this and the heart in some small degree sensible of it, we cannot shake off the impression that there is, underlying the present state of society, a spirit of infidelity most appalling to contemplate. Nor does the spirit merely underlie the framework of society, but, alas! in many cases it embodies itself in fearful forms, and stalks abroad with bold and impious front in the very bosom of religious profession. Take the following from a recent writer who, we grieve to say, can set forth in glowing and eloquent language, the "broken lights" of this world, but who, if we are to judge from her work, has never felt the power of that "true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"—that light which can never be broken—never put out—even Jesus "the Sun of Righteousness," and "The Bright and Morning Star." "Few," says this writer, "even of the recognized teachers of religion, who are most ready to denounce the 'infidelity' of the times—"

would be willing to acknowledge how far the doubts of the age have actually advanced towards questioning these great truths. A few years ago it was remarked in some provincial town in England, that, on the same day on which the clergy were holding a discussion concerning the Gorham controversy, and the mode in which baptism operated in regeneration, the working men of the place were debating in their Hall the question, 'Whether there were any proof of the existence of God?' Just in this manner are learned men writing and preaching throughout the land, arguing as if the only opinions threatened were such matters as the authenticity of certain portions of the Bible, and the bearings of modern science on some scriptural narratives. Underneath this thin ice, over which the controversialists perform their evolutions with more or less grace and vigour, there lies an abyss—the abyss cold, dark, and fathomless—of utter scepticism."

Such is the testimony of one of a class of writers who are able to see the condition of things, but who, alas! know not the true remedy—who have never taken their place at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right mind. Now, it is sometimes profitable to hear what such witnesses have to say. True, they have only one side of the question, if they have even that. They see much of the hollowness of what is passing around them; they see the inconsistency of professing Christians, the insufficiency and unsatisfactoriness of mere systematic religion, the coldness and dreariness of dogmatic theology, the covetousness and worldliness of many high professors. All these things, they can see with a keen enough eye; but they know not the relief, the resource, the comfort, the peace, the blessedness, the strength, the victory, the moral elevation which are to be found at the feet of a Saviour and a Lord. Here is where they are all astray. They can teach men how to doubt; but they give them nothing to believe. They give no certainty to the heart, no rest-

ing place for the sole of the foot. They talk of God; but they do not tell us where He is to be found, known, and enjoyed, even in the face of Jesus Christ, and on the eternal page of inspiration. They talk of virtue; but they do not tell us where the only true source and centre of all virtue must be sought, even in Jesus, our Saviour God—in having Him as our life, our object, our model, our all. They talk of immortality, of a future state; but it is all mist, gloom, and uncertainty. What can immortality, or what a future state, prove to be, but immortal misery and a state of eternal woe, if there be not the saving knowledge of Jesus, the resurrection and the life?

The fact is, dear christian reader, what we want is *reality*—deep-toned, thorough-going, out-and-out reality—reality in leaning on, looking to, and living for Christ. Nothing less than this will do for the present moment. Things are in rapid progress. Society seems to move forward with the speed of a railway and the electric wire. “Go ahead” is the motto of the day in everything, in science, in commerce, in politics, and religion. The world is rushing along, like an express train, to the dark tunnel of universal scepticism, and the still darker abyss of eternal perdition. This is a deeply solemn reflection, and one eminently calculated to produce seriousness and gravity in the tone and character of all true Christians. There is a demand for devotedness of *heart* on the part of all who have experienced the saving power of the Name of Jesus. The sceptic and the infidel can pick holes in the dogmas of systematic divinity. They can, with eagle eye, discern the flaws in the great ecclesiastical systems that bear sway throughout the civilized world. Mere official piety, mechanical religion, and superstitious routine cannot stand before the lash of infidelity and rationalism. But, oh! there is a power, a weight, a dignity, about a truly devoted christian life which not one of the shafts of the infidel can ever touch. There is little use in printing and

publishing truth in the pages of our books, our pamphlets, and our periodicals, if that truth does not shine in our practical life. Of what avail is it to preach, to write, and to talk of the heavenly calling, if our conduct and character are marked by intense selfishness and worldliness. And so of every other truth in circulation amongst us. It must shine in the life or it is valueless, so far as we are concerned.

Is it that we do not value truth as put forth by the pen or the living voice? By no means. We value it more than words can express. But then if this truth does not act on the conscience, affect the heart, and govern the life, it becomes worse than valueless, it becomes positive darkness in the soul. There is nothing so darkening or so deadening as truth professed and not practised. Intellectual familiarity with doctrines where the heart is not subject to Christ, or the conscience governed by His commandments, will assuredly issue in a hideous Antinomianism. In point of fact, we are persuaded that we know only just so much truth as really acts upon us. We do not and cannot believe that people know truth if that truth has no weight or influence in the life. There is nothing more dangerous than to traffic in unfelt truth; and it is this that adds such deep seriousness to the thought of the vast amount of truth in circulation amongst us, in one form or another. There is a melancholy disproportion between our ethics and our theology—between our religious creed and our moral character—between our profession and our practice.

Now, we do not write thus for the purpose of depressing the heart of the christian reader. Nothing is further from our thoughts. We would fain cheer and encourage all whose desire is to follow the Lord with purpose of heart. But then we do greatly dread the strong Antinomian tendency of the present day, and we feel called upon to warn our readers strongly against it, and also to present to them the only divine antidote against it, namely, being found in

all humility of mind, at the feet of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is our only safe retreat. Here we are safe from self, safe from the world, safe from all the wiles and snares of Satan. It is as we find our place, from day to day, at our Master's feet, and there drink in His holy doctrine from the pages of His word—it is as we gaze upon Him and deeply ponder His commands in our hearts, that we shall be able to pursue a course of true devotedness to Him and to His cause in this world, and to bring forth, in daily life, the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. We are free to own that what we long for in ourselves and in all our brethren, is genuine devotedness to the Person and Cause of Christ. We believe that where this exists, everything will come right; but where it does not exist, there will be nothing right. If the hands of a watch are astray it will not suffice to set them right, you must touch the regulator. If you merely move the hands backward or forward upon the dial, it is labour lost. The only way to effect any permanent change, is to get at once to that which regulates the motion of the whole machine. So it is with ourselves. If the heart be right toward Jesus, we shall not go far astray as to character and conduct. Hence the force of the word, "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Oh! that we may have grace so to do, in these days of self-will and self-indulgence!

It may, perhaps, be thought that we have wandered far from our direct theme; but it is not so in reality, for it must be remembered that our subject has two sides, namely, our salvation in Christ, and Christ's authority over us. This, it will be admitted, affords a very wide field indeed. The demoniac was rescued from the power of Satan and brought under the authority of Christ. Blessed exchange! He could, as he sat at the feet of his gracious Deliverer, look back at those tombs where he had spent his nights

and days ; he could think of the stones with which he used to cut himself ; and it may be that his body bore the traces of the chains and fetters with which his fellows had vainly sought to bind him. But now he was delivered ; he was safe, calm, and happy : and as he beheld the herd of swine rushing violently down into the abyss, he could say, "That would have been my fate—I too had gone down into that dreadful abyss, but for the grace of Him at whose feet I now sit in perfect peace. 'Oh ! to grace how great a debtor.'"

Thus it is with every saved soul. We can look back at the past, and see what we were ; we can look forward into the future, and see what we *might* be ; we can look at the present, and see what we are ; and we can take another look into the future, and see what we *shall* be. And what then ? Why then we have simply to gaze in the face of Jesus our loving Saviour, who pitied us in our lost and miserable condition ; who beheld us, with an eye of deep and tender compassion, as we lay in the iron grasp of the enemy ; who came down into all the depths of our wretchedness, and wrought out a full deliverance for us from all that was against us, clothed us with a robe of spotless righteousness, endowed us with His own mind, and has given us the holy privilege of sitting ever at His feet to drink in his pure and heavenly doctrine, and prove the moral security of His presence and influence.

But here let us enquire as to the effect produced upon the Gadarenes by all that Jesus had wrought for and in the poor demoniac. Were they glad to see that so perfectly accomplished which they had tried in vain to effect ? They had sought to bind him, but could not ; and now they saw him bound, not indeed with fetters of iron, but with chains of love. They had sought to tame him, but could not ; and now he was tame—tame as a lamb, reposing at his Shepherd's feet. Did they rejoice ? Quite the reverse. How was this ? Ah ! they had lost their swine, and they thought

far more of them than of Jesus. The Son of God, in all His grace and majesty, was a poor substitute, to the heart of a Gadarene, for a herd of swine. True, the devils were gone; but the swine were gone also, and the Gadarenes would far rather have had the devils and the swine, than Jesus and the mighty triumphs of His grace, and hence "they besought him to depart out of their coasts." They connected the loss of their swine with the presence of Jesus, whereas the demoniac could only connect with that same blessed presence his full deliverance from the terrible legion of devils. This made all the difference. They did not want His presence; he could not be happy in His absence. They besought him to depart; he prayed that he might be with Him.

It is interesting to notice the three requests that were made of Jesus in this narrative. The devils besought him to send them into the swine, and He did so. The Gadarenes besought Him to depart out of their coast, and He did so. But when the rescued one, the subject of His delivering grace and power, besought Him that he might be with Him, He refused. Why was this? Why grant the request of devils and of Gadarenes, and refuse the one who had proved His saving power? The answer only illustrates yet more forcibly the grace of Jesus. "And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit, Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel." What grace shines out here! It is as though He had said, "These people will not have me. They have cast me out. Go thou back to them, and bear witness to the grace that has met your need. Go and declare what the Lord has done for thee."

Reader, hast thou found mercy? Has thy desperate case been fully met by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? Art thou delivered from the grasp of Satan? Have the chains of thy bondage been broken by His powerful hand? Art thou clothed and in thy right mind? Then remember, thy *place* is at the feet of Jesus—thy *work* to testify for Him. He has been down here in this world. He came, in perfect grace, to deliver thee from the terrible power of Satan, and from everlasting perdition, to make thee happy with Himself, for ever, in that glorious world above. But the world cast Him out. It would not have Him; and now He says to thee, “Go, witness for me.” This is the grand object of Christian life. We are called to live as witnesses for an absent, a rejected Christ, to exhibit Him in all the scenes and circumstances of daily life.

“Go home to thy friends and tell them.” How much is involved in these words! It is in the very bosom of our families we are called to testify, not merely in words, but in spirit, manner, temper, style, and deportment. It is one thing to be a saint on the benches of a meeting-room, and another thing to live the saint in the bosom of the domestic circle, before the wife, or the husband, the children, the servants, the master, the mistress, or the fellow-servants. There are few things more depressing and discouraging to one who really longs for the prosperity of souls and the integrity of the testimony, than to hear such words as these: “Oh, such an one talks very beautifully, but did you ever see him at home? Do you know how he treats his wife, his children, or his servants? Had you ever any dealings with him?” So also of the wife, the child, the servant. It is most sad, most humiliating, to find that those who know us best, and have the best opportunity of judging, see the least evidence of genuine, practical Christianity in our ways. But, oh! what joy and comfort fill the soul when one hears such testimony as this: “If you would know such an one, you have only to

see him in the bosom of his family, to witness him in the details of his business, or know him in the deep intimacies of daily life." This, truly, is a cordial to the spirit. Would there were more of it! Would that we all knew more of what it is to take our place, morning by morning, in spirit, at the feet of Jesus, our Deliverer and our Lord, and from thence to go forth in testimony for Him in the very midst of that sphere in which our lot is cast. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Thus may it be, blessed Lord, with all who profess thy name!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



MEDITATIONS

ON THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

It may be well, before closing our meditations on the cup of joy, to dwell a little on its contrast, *the cup of sorrow*. In the saint's experience, the latter often goes before and accompanies the former. The one being *natural*, and the other *spiritual*, both may be full at the same time. It is only while in the body and on the earth that we can meet with the cup of sorrow. It will be unmingled joy in heaven. There, we shall be met at the threshold with "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then we shall drink, and drink for ever, of the Master's own cup. We shall drink from the same fountain as Christ Himself. Having the same life, we shall have the same relish for the joys, the employment, and the blessedness of heaven; though not, of course, to the same degree.

Without this divine nature there can be no relish for divine things. To mere human nature the light of heaven would be more intolerable than the darkness of hell. Oh! what a thought! An immortal soul so driven to despair through a sense of guilt in the presence of holiness, as to

seek a shelter in the depths of darkness — as to cry “to the mountains and rocks, *Fall on us*, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” (Rev. vi. 16.) But even now when the gospel of God’s grace is preached to sinners, it is said of such, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John iii. 19.) O that all such might be induced *now* to come to the light—the light of eternal love—the light of the cross of Jesus—the light of the boundless grace of God! Come! O sinner, come! Better far be revealed now in the light of the glorious gospel where all is grace and love—where thy many sins can be pardoned, and where eternal life is received as the gift of God, than be revealed before the face of the Judge, when the door of mercy is closed. Why not come? Is there not a terrible sting in sin, even now, when the pleasure of it is past? Hast thou not tasted this, O my fellow-sinner? How many are maddened to deeds of violence through the remorse and bitterness of sin, when the pleasure that led on to it is turned into gall and wormwood? But what must its bitterness be in that place where hopeless despair seizes the soul in all its dread reality? There, nothing but the sin and the sting remain, with the fearful conviction that no relief can ever come.

Why not then, my fellow-sinner, be entreated to come to Jesus now—just now? If so guilty—so far down in the social scale, that thou art ashamed of thyself in the presence of others—yet thou mayest freely, trustingly come to Jesus. Thou wilt be welcome there. And rest assured of a present pardon, salvation, and acceptance, through his precious blood. Such was the experience of the woman that was a sinner, and of the penitent thief on the cross; and such may be thine. He who died on the cross for thee and me, is surely fit to be trusted. And say, would He have died for us if He had not loved us? Oh! lift thine

eyes to that cross, and see His unquenchable love bleeding there! Seekest thou another sign save the sign of the cross? God forbid! The great reality in the universe, is the love of Jesus! Heaven, earth, and hell, for a time, were all against the sinner's Substitute. All refuge failed Him. (Ps. cxlii. 4.) But then it was that His love burst forth through every weight and pressure in all its native strength and glory. Many waters could not quench His love, no floods could drown it; though He could say, in spirit, "the waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depths closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head." (Jonah ii. 5.) Again, and again, we would ask thee—Wilt thou, dost thou, value the love that willingly passed through all this suffering for the chief of sinners? And, with what end in view, thinkest thou? That they might one day share with Him His throne in glory. Do lean all thy weight on Jesus—trust all to Him. His eye can never grow dim—His arm can never become feeble—His heart can never turn cold. For time and for eternity, thou art only safe and happy in trusting Him.

But see, O my soul, how far thou hast wandered from the footsteps of the flock—from their joys and sorrows. Well, be it so. The Good Shepherd was content to leave the ninety-and-nine that were secure, and go far into the wilderness after a single lost sheep, and seek until He found it.

We were speaking of the two-fold aspect of the Christian's experience. The cup of natural sorrow, and the cup of spiritual joy. He may know, at times, what it is to have both cups filled to overflowing. The poor human heart may be so broken with sorrow, that it cannot look up; strength, motive, object, as to this life, may be gone. At such a moment he feels a pressure as if he were down and could never rise up again. And surely, but for the Lord's helping hand, he must have gone a step beyond the

rallying point. Such is the crushing, exhausting weight of human sorrow—and such, the Lord's loved ones may be allowed to experience. The blessed Lord Himself as the Man of sorrows, had deeper experience therein than any of His people ever can have. And now as the living Head, and great High Priest of His people, He knows how to succour, and raise up, the sorrow-stricken soul.

Just at this point, the Lord may so reveal Himself to the soul as to draw the eye away from its own sorrow, and turn aside the keen edge of its anguish. Not that the trial is removed, or less; nay, it may be deepening, and that which is dreaded may be unmistakably drawing near. But the soul, we may say, is now in two regions—two states of being. In nature, amidst the desolations of earth; in faith, amidst the unchangeable realities of heaven. Both are real; but the spiritual joy changes the character of the earthly sorrow, and strengthens to bear it. Quietness of soul being restored, it now remembers, that the happy soul is only called up to wait with the Lord, and to enjoy a quiet time with Him before the public display of His glory. But, oh! what experience; and how real! To have poured out, at the same moment, a full cup of joy, and a full cup of sorrow too! The latter, we know, shall ere long be clean forgotten; but the former will be remembered throughout eternity, as one of the strongest, sweetest expressions of the Saviour's compassion, love, and tender sympathy.

In Rom. v. 1—11 we have this line of christian experience clearly set before us. It may be profitable to glance at it for a moment. To have a personal and spiritual acquaintance with these eleven verses, is a rich inheritance to the soul. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." In these two verses, the full blessing of the soul, with reference to the

past, the present, and the future, is summed up. The work of Christ is the basis of it all. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

As to the *past*, in the case of every believer, all is blotted out—all connected with the old man came to its end, in God's sight, on the cross. Both the root and fruit of sin were judged there. All that needed putting away, was put away, according to the claims of God's glory and the sinner's need. Hence, the Christian is now one with Christ in resurrection. Death, judgment, the world, sin, and Satan, are behind him. On this ground—the ground of death and resurrection, there is perfect peace for the Christian—peace with God. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." As to the *present*, we are introduced to the full favour of God. Our standing is in grace. "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." And as to the *future*, we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We are placed between the cross and the crown; our yesterday was Calvary, our to-morrow is glory.

This is true christian *condition*; not *experience*, but *faith*. Being justified, having peace, standing in grace, waiting for glory. Experience flows from this condition. The Spirit of God having conducted the Christian to the very height of his condition, as a new man in Christ, and even given him a glimpse of the glory behind the veil, He brings him back, as it were, to taste, in experience, the trials of this life. Still he can glory. He glories in the depths as well as on the heights. None can glory in tribulation as those who are rejoicing in the immediate hope of the glory of God. So it was with the great apostle, who was "caught up to the third heavens." There he found Christ as the only ground of his glorying; but when down here again, and in tribulation through "a thorn in the flesh," he found the same Christ in the depths with him. "Most gladly therefore," he exclaims, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest

upon me." And such experience we also find in the eleven verses before us. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Thus the wheels of his soul are set in motion, and, through deep exercise, he again, we may say, reaches the heights. He has now the blessed enjoyment of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. What a blessed state of soul to be in, though under the very shadow of death! But this is not all; he has more to learn in this vale of tears, he must go through another kind of experience. The Christian is again brought back, not to the lesson of tribulation, but to an experimental acquaintance with the depths of his own moral ruin. What he was, as *without strength, ungodly, a sinner, and an enemy*, he is now taught; but he learns these humiliating truths in the light of God's perfect love, and the Saviour's perfect work, and the Holy Spirit's presence. And mark now, O my soul, the point he reaches by this process; higher he can never be raised. "But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Surely, joying in God Himself, surpasses all our enjoyment of the things He gives.

Well mayest thou wonder, O my soul, at what may be known, experienced, and enjoyed by the poor pilgrim saint in the wilderness. In the eyes of men he may appear a heartless, soulless, joyless, undefinable inhabitant of earth. But oh! what depths he penetrates—what heights he scales—what sights he sees—what power he commands, and what glory gilds his path! With him, it is glory on the threshold of heaven, and glory in the valley of humiliation. He knows the history of the future better than the past, and divine light sheds its rays on the present. Ah! poor, blind, dead world, thou knowest not

this mysterious man ! Oh ! that thou wouldst but come to Him who is the light of life, and the light of men. Grace has no evil eye : what it has it longs for thee to share. It preaches, prays, watches, that thou mayest know and love the only Friend of sinners. Were one candle to light a dozen, its own light would be undiminished, but the united light is stronger and better. Now, just now, cast in thy lot with those who are walking in the light of the Lord ; and may thine own path be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

“ Though in my flesh dwell no good thing,
 Yet *Christ* in me I joyful sing,
 Sin I confess, and I deny ;
 For, though I sin, it is not I.

I sin against, and with, my will :
 I'm innocent, yet guilty still.
 Though fain I'd be the greatest saint,
 To be the least I'd be content.

My lowness may my height evince,
 I'm both a beggar and a prince ;
 With meanest subjects I appear,
 With kings a royal sceptre bear.

I'm both unfettered and involved ;
 By law condemned, by law absolved ;
 My guilt condignly punished see,
 Yet I the guilty one go free.

My gain did by my loss begin ;
 My righteousness commenced by sin ;
 My perfect peace by bloody strife ;
 Life is my death, and death my life.

I am not worth one dusty grain,
 Yet more than worlds of golden gain ;
 Though worthless, I myself indite,
 Yet shall as worthy walk in white.”

THREE SORE EVILS.

THERE are three things from which many of the people of God suffer severely, and which may truly be called "sore evils," namely, a legal mind, a morbid conscience, a self-occupied heart. We can do little more in these few lines, than name these things and point out the remedies for them, praying the Lord, in His great mercy, to give full deliverance to any of our readers who may be tried by any or all of these things

I. And, first, as to a legal mind. This is a very common evil, and one hard to be laid aside. In many cases, it cleaves to the very last, and robs the soul of that peace and liberty which are the proper portion of all the children of God. It exhibits itself in various ways. It hinders the soul in its enjoyment of the free grace of God, and of the salvation which that grace has accomplished, and lowers the whole tone of the life and character. Furthermore, it falsifies the character of God, by presenting Him as an Exactor demanding a certain amount of duty, instead of a Giver delighting in praise. In a word, a legal mind, in so far as it is allowed to work, spoils everything. It creates a dark cloud between the soul and God, and in doing this it throws everything into confusion. There may be the most scrupulous attention to the letter of scripture -- the most earnest desire to keep the standard of conduct up to what that letter enjoins, all right enough, no doubt, but the legal mind renders all cold, formal, heavy, and ungenial. Service is put as a duty instead of a delight. It chills the affections and hinders their going out after God Himself.

Thus much as to this first sore evil. And now one word as to the remedy. What is it? *Grace*. Yes; grace is the grand remedy for a legal mind. Let the free grace of God, in all its sweetness and heavenly power, enter into

the soul. Let God be known and enjoyed in His true character as the Giver—the One delighting in worship—inhabiting the praises of His ransomed people. Let grace possess the whole being. Let it be known and realized that we stand in absolute grace, that we are not under law, but under grace, that every yoke is broken, and every fetter burst, that we are looked at in Christ, and loved as He is loved, washed in His blood, and brought nigh to God. Let these divine realities be laid hold of in the power of simple, child-like faith, and the shadows of a legal mind will be chased away, and all its hateful workings counteracted. A heart established with grace is the sovereign remedy, the divine specific, for the sore disease of a legal mind.

II. We shall now dwell for a moment on a morbid conscience. How does this evil work? It, too, works in various ways, and cuts out a vast amount of sorrowful work for the soul. It is continually creating difficulties and suggesting doubts. Instead of being governed by the plain precepts of the word of God, it is ever and only governed by its own fears. No one who has not been troubled with a morbid conscience can have any idea of the amount of suffering it entails upon its possessor. If it should so happen, and it often does, that a morbid conscience stands connected with a legal mind, the poor harassed soul must be a stranger to peace and joy in believing.

Now, what is the remedy for this sad and afflictive disease? *Truth.* The plain truth of God, the authority of holy Scripture, the conscience brought into immediate contact with the Word, and subjection to it alone—this is the remedy for a morbid conscience. In this way, the soul is governed simply by the claims of divine truth, and not by its own scrupulous fears—an immense deliverance!

III. Finally, as to the grievous evil of a self-occupied heart. It would be utterly impossible to trace its workings,

so manifold and various are they. There are few who do not know something of this, even though they may not suffer from a morbid conscience or a legal mind. A self-occupied heart leads us to look at things, and think of things, and estimate things in reference to ourselves. We value people in proportion as they adapt themselves or are agreeable to us. There is, though we may not be fully aware of it, a manifest leaning toward persons who suit us in tastes, feelings, opinions, and habits of thought. We like those who agree with us in all our peculiar views and prejudices. Men and things are not looked at in simple reference to Christ and His interests, but rather to self and its interests.

This is indeed a sore evil. We may say, and say it, too, with much decision, that self-occupation is the death-blow to fellowship—fellowship with God, and fellowship with God's people. And what is the remedy? What is the infallible cure, the divine specific for self-occupation? *The Person of Christ.* *Grace* is the remedy for a legal mind, *truth* for a morbid conscience, and the embodiment of *grace* and *truth*, even Christ Himself, for the self-occupied heart. May we know the real power and blessedness of these things!



A F R A G M E N T .

A COVENANT is a principle of relationship with God on the earth; conditions established by God, under which man is to live with Him. The word may, perhaps, be used figuratively or by accommodation. It is applied to details of the relationship of God with Israel; but strictly speaking, there are but two covenants, the old and the new. The old was established at Sinai. The new covenant is made also with the two houses of Israel. The gospel is not a

covenant, but the revelation of the salvation of God. It proclaims the great salvation. We enjoy indeed all the essential privileges of the new covenant, its foundation being of God ; but we do so in spirit, not according to the letter. The new covenant will be established formally with Israel in the millennium.



THE HOLY ONE OF GOD.

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”—*MATT.* iii. 17.

O THOU beloved and lovely One of God !
 Whom I have learnt to love—from whom so long
 I wandered in the night of misery
 And sin ; but to whose dear and bleeding feet,
 Drawn by the cords of love, my soul has come,
 To stay and rest for ever: fain would I
 Lift up to thee the voice of gratitude,
 And sing thy matchless worth, whose glorious praise
 Sounds from the lips and harps of heavenly choirs.
 And fills the unmeasured universe of God
 With solemn, sweet, and ceaseless harmony !
 Thy name is “ Wonderful ”—thy Person is
 The mystery of mysteries—the Word
 Of God incarnate . . .

And yet, O Christ,
 Thou art all meek and lowly—like a lamb
 For gentleness, and like a weaned child
 For sweet humility—God’s meek and lowly child.
 Ne’er didst thou break the bruised reed, nor quench
 The smoking flax, nor turn away from pain,
 Or poverty, or feebleness, or woe,
 When such have sought thee. No ! but to thine arms
 Hast bid them welcome ; with thy tender hands
 Hast healed their diseases—bound up
 Their broken hearts, and wiped their tears away.

And thou art still the same ! no shadows come
O'er the light of thy pure holiness :
No storms disturb the calm of thy deep peace :
No changes cross the ocean of thy love—
The same for ever ! yes, the same to me
This day as when at first my wondering eyes
Beheld by faith thy glory—the same
This day to all who seek thee, as thou wast
To the poor outcast woman who of old
Embraced thy feet, and washed them with her tears,
And loved thee much, for she was much forgiven.
O thou beloved and lovely One ! what words
Can speak thy worth ! what words can ever tell
All that thou art, thou everlasting all !
Dear bleeding Lamb ! blest fountain, where I cleanse
My sin-stained soul ! O river of my peace !
Rock of my rest ! shelter from every storm !
Light of my darkness ! joy of my distress !
Balm of my wounded spirit ! morning star
Of all my future ! haven of my hopes !
O day-spring from on high, whose cloudless light
Has beamed upon me, banishing my night
With dawn of heaven ; Sun of Righteousness !
Rise, oh, for ever rise ! for ever shine
Brighter and brighter ! from all weeping eyes
Remove all tears ; and over all thy saints,
And over earth and heaven, and o'er the bounds
Of Time's dark night, and far into the depths
Of all eternity, pour out the light,
Pour out the sea of glory, the full sea
Of all thy glory inexhaustible,
Pour out for ever and for evermore ;
And o'er the earth renewed, and azure heaven
Unshadowed, and the realms of endless peace,
Spread the sweet noontide of the hallowed day.



JESUS, A DELIVERER AND LORD.

(PART III.)

OUR last paper on this subject closed with the commission given by our blessed Lord to the rescued demoniac; "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things *the Lord* hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Such was the commission, but mark how it was executed. "And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis, how great things *Jesus* had done for him." This is a very fine moral lesson for each one who knows Jesus, a Deliverer. This man knew Jesus as his Lord, and hence, when called to tell what the Lord had done for him, he could own no other Lord but Jesus. He associated with that most precious and honoured name all that had been done for him, and all the deep compassion that had flowed down to him in his misery. To him there was but one Lord, Jesus Christ, who had delivered him from the power of Satan, and translated him from amongst the tombs, to make him the happy subject of His delivering grace, and the honoured witness thereof to all around.

Now, this is precisely what we want to see in ourselves, and in all who profess to know the saving power of the Name of Jesus. We want to see plain decision for the Lord Christ, the positive owning of Him in all things, the linking on of everything to Him who is our Saviour and Lord, so that He may be glorified, and all men constrained to see that there is, after all, unmistakable reality in having to do with the Name of Jesus. We have little idea of the effect which would be produced on the minds of men, were all Christians only led to connect all they do, and all they do not do, with the Name of Jesus, and with His authority as Lord. Generally speaking, people will resolve all questions of religious associations, social habits, and domestic concerns, into a simple matter of opinion, taste,

prejudice, or predilection. Hence the importance of being able to refer all to a "Thus saith the Lord." We have no right to have an opinion or a will of our own. The word of the Lord is to be our opinion, His authority our will, His will our rule. A man may say, "You have your opinion, and I have mine." We answer, "No;" but the grand question is, "What saith the Scripture?" We ought to be able to refer all our ways, our habits, and our associations to Jesus as Lord—to His authority—and to His example.

Yes, christian reader, we repeat the word "*all*." It is not merely the weighty matters connected with our religious associations, but all our little matters should be regulated by the sense—the deep, abiding, influential sense of the Lordship of our Saviour Christ. If we but gather up a shovelful of cinders from the hearth, or lift a crumb of bread from the floor, we should give as our reason for so doing, the blessed Master's words, "Let nothing be lost." "Thus saith the Lord" should be the great regulating and governing motto in everything, be it great or small. We should not go on, for one hour, in anything, no matter how attractive, how plausible, or how expedient it may be, for which we have not authority in the revealed will of God. Alas! alas! in many things we fail; again and again, we prove forgetful and unfaithful; our lusts, our tempers, and our vanities betray us, at unguarded moments, and cut out sad work for the heart and conscience; but for one who has tasted the delivering grace of Jesus, to go, deliberately into, or deliberately on in, a thing that denies the authority of Jesus as Lord, argues a very hardened and dangerous condition of soul, from which may the good Lord deliver all who call themselves by His Holy Name.

We may, if the Lord will, have occasion to dwell at more length upon this great practical theme, and shall now proceed with the other cases presented to our notice in this fifth chapter of Mark. We have considered the demoniac, let us now look at

THE DISEASED ONE.

This case rather presents the Lord as a Healer, than as a Deliverer; but it is a hallowed and edifying exercise to trace Him in all His ways down here; and happy, too, to remember that He is everything to us. We have all we want in Him. Are we held in the terrible grasp of Satan? He is a Deliverer. Are we burdened with a sense of guilt upon the conscience? He is a Justifier. Are we conscious of having backslidden and fallen? He is a Restorer. Are we bowed down under the weight of disease and infirmity? He is a Healer.

“ Jesus, my all in all thou art :
My rest in toil, my ease in pain ;
The medicine of my broken heart ;
'Mid storms, my peace ; in loss, my gain ;
My smile beneath the tyrant's frown ;
In shame, my glory and my crown.”

“ And when Jesus was passed over again, by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My *little* daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him and thronged him. And a certain woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse; when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment: for she said, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole.”

Here, then, we have another, and a distinct phase of the sinner's condition illustrated. We see him here, not as in the giant grasp of Satan, led captive by him at his will, but as one having in himself the spring and source of a

weakening and a defiling malady. Here, too, human efforts are in vain. This poor woman had tried human physicians ; she had spent all her living in searching for health, but instead of any improvement, she grew worse and worse. How like this case is to the case of many of us, we need hardly say. We felt the sad disease of sin working in us ; and not only working *in* us, but sending forth a defiling influence from us. We tried to better ourselves. We went from physician to physician, from remedy to remedy, from scheme to scheme ; but all in vain. Year after year rolled on, and still we fondly hoped that some relief would come, some improvement shew itself ; but no, " worse and worse " was the sad and disappointing experience, day after day, year after year. Thus it was with this poor diseased one ; her case was beyond all human aid.

But, then, a report reached her ears. She heard of Jesus. When all her living was gone, and her malady had increased as her means diminished, the testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth was brought home to her weary and disappointed heart. No doubt the selfsame record had fallen upon the ears of thousands needing it just as much as she ; but ah ! reader, remember this, there is such a thing as " The hearing of faith." It is one thing to hear with the ear, and quite another thing to hear with the heart. It is " with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Now our poor diseased one heard with the heart—she heard and believed. Believed what ? She believed that Jesus was able and willing to do the part of a healer to her. She said, " If I may touch but his clothes I shall be whole." In a word, she believed that contact with Jesus was the only thing for her, and hence she might have been seen, notwithstanding all her weakness and disease, making her way through the crowd to get to Jesus. Unbelief would suggest difficulties, but faith surmounts all difficulties, it can take the roofs off houses, and force its way through the greatest crowd that ever surrounded its object.

Now nothing can be more interesting or instructive than to mark the course of this woman from first to last. She stands out in striking contrast with the whole multitude that thronged around our blessed Lord. Many in that crowd, no doubt, touched Him—could not help touching Him because of the crush; but, in the midst of all, there was one touch of faith, and that mysterious touch, as is ever the case, drew forth divine virtue from Jesus, the Healer of His people's diseases. It is impossible to touch Jesus, by faith, and not get blessing. The moment the poor diseased one came in contact with the Divine Healer, she was healed. How could it be otherwise? The two were fitted for one another, and when they met, all was settled. "*Straightway, the fountain was dried.*" This is the way in which Jesus ever does His work. He reaches the very source of the malady, and that "immediately." There was nothing to wait for, nothing to be added, no need for a finishing touch from a human hand, no occasion for any further application to human physicians; contact with Jesus settled everything.

Reader, have you ever felt the power of contact with the Divine Healer? Have you ever touched Jesus by faith? Have you ever felt yourself to be a poor diseased one, having within you a sore malady from which no human hand can deliver you? Have you been seeking relief in the various appliances of formal religiousness? Have you proved them all to be physicians of no value? Do you find yourself no better, but rather worse? Do you feel yourself, at this moment, sick at heart, weary of yourself and of all around you? If so, let us entreat you, at once, to follow the example of the diseased one—come to Jesus. Nothing can ever avail you but contact with Him. One touch, one look of faith, is all you want to meet the deep source of your malady—a source far too deep to be reached by any human hand.

Do you reply, "I cannot come of myself; I cannot

believe, I cannot give that touch, that look of faith, until get power. I long to do so, but I must wait until the Holy Spirit enables me." Do you mean, then, to say that you are in no wise responsible to receive the record of God? Are you, so far as the truth of God is concerned, wholly irresponsible? Will there be no guilt attaching to you for your refusal to accept God's proffered mercy, Christ's free salvation, and the Spirit's faithful record? If you should die in your sins, think you that you will be able, before the judgment-seat of Christ, to cast upon God the blame of your not having believed the gracious message of salvation? What mean these words, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe, in that day—because our testimony among you was believed?" And again, "In 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 should believe a lie; *that they all might be damned who believed not the truth*, but had pleasure in unrighteousness?"

We faithfully urge upon your attention these solemn and weighty words. Be assured of it, you cannot, by any possibility, get rid of your responsibility before God, nor can any system of divinity be wholly correct, or sound, which so presents God's sovereignty as to do away with man's responsibility. We must ever remember that there are two sides to every question, and it is of all importance to take both sides into consideration, and turn each side in the right direction. This is exactly what human systems of divinity fail to do. But the word of God puts everything

into its right place. Throughout the Gospels and the Acts, we hearken to such words as these, "Ye *will* not come to me that ye might have life." "How often *would I* have gathered your children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and *ye would* not." "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out." "Seeing ye put it from you, and deem yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles." "God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." "Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean."

Here we have one side of this great question, and moreover, the side which is turned toward the sinner as he approaches the sacred volume. It is well to see this clearly. If I, as a poor, helpless, guilty sinner, take up the New Testament and read it throughout, what do I find? Am I scared away by discouraging statements as to my total inability to come to Jesus, my utter incompetency to receive His precious message? Am I taught that it is of no use my trying to come to Jesus? That all my efforts are in vain? That I must only wait, no one knows how long, until the divine influence comes upon me? Nothing of the sort. What then? I find God revealed in the Person of Christ, as one come down into this world, in perfect grace, to seek and save the lost; and when I track the footsteps of that blessed One, when I mark His ways and His works, I find Him meeting man, in all his varied need and misery, with the varied resources of grace that were in His overflowing heart. I do not find Him repulsing any needy applicant. "*Come* unto me, and *I will give*," was ever the motto of Him who came into the world "*to serve and to give*."

But, we may be asked, "What do you make of John vi. 44: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him?" Well, it is not our business to *make* anything of this or of any other passage of Holy Scripture, but simply to take it as it stands. But what is

it? Is it Christ's word to anxious enquirers? Ah! no; it is His silencing reply to murmuring Jews—to cavilling religionists. Let this be duly weighed. And let the reader also note, carefully, the contrast between our Lord's answer to the murmuring Jews, and His answer to those who said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." To these latter He said, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and *him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.*" The use that is frequently made of John vi. 44 is directly opposed to the spirit of the whole context, as well as to the spirit and character of our Lord's ministry from first to last.

Do we then deny God's sovereignty on the one hand, or man's utter impotency on the other. By no means; we believe both, because Scripture teaches both. The epistles give us the other side of this question; but this is the side which is turned toward the believer, for the epistles, as we know, are addressed to those who have believed through grace. The fact is this, we are not called to frame systems of divinity. The Holy Spirit in Scripture is not so occupied. His object is to unfold Christ, as Christ's object was to unfold the Father; and we look in vain from cover to cover of the New Testament, for a single instance in which an anxious enquirer was ever discouraged or repulsed by the one-sided dogmas of theology, or in which the moral responsibility of the sinner is ever ignored. Each truth gets its proper place, because Christ is the centre of all truth. He is the central Sun from whence the rays of light emanate in all directions. Nothing can be more disastrous, both to the integrity of divine truth on the one hand, or the interest of souls on the other, than the framing of one-sided theological systems. So, also, when the evangelist abandons his proper line and intrudes upon

the domain of the teacher—when, instead of preaching Christ, and beseeching sinners, he commences to unfold doctrine, he will find himself cramped and hindered, and the souls of his hearers stumbled and perplexed. The evangelist has to do with the love of God to a lost world, with the wide aspect of the work of Christ, as the expression of that love, and the glad tidings of full and free salvation as the fruit of both. The teacher has to do with the counsels of God, with the love of Christ to His Church, the operations of the Spirit of God, and all the varied results of accomplished redemption, in heaven and on earth, here and hereafter. Would that these distinctions were more faithfully attended to!

But we must return to our immediate theme, and, in so doing, we call attention to a very important fact. No sooner had the diseased one given the touch of simple, artless, unquestioning faith, than “she *felt* in her body that she was healed.” She was not hoping about it; she felt she was healed. There was no question about it. True, there was “fearing and trembling;” but it was not the fearing of one not knowing what was done in her. Quite the reverse. She knew what was done for her and in her, but trembled at the thought of having to come forward in confession or testimony. “And Jesus immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?” How wonderful! The very moment the mysterious link of faith was formed, between the diseased one and the Divine Healer, the former felt that virtue had entered into her, and the latter that virtue had gone out. Thus it is always. The moment a lost sinner comes in contact with the Divine Saviour, he is saved—saved for ever—“Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.”

And should not this be felt? Yes, assuredly, felt and owned. “And Jesus looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trem-

bling, *knowing what was done* in her (not doubting it) came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." Here then we have confession made unto salvation. Had this woman walked away, as soon as she got the blessing—had she refused to come forward in testimony, what would have been the consequence? Why she would have lost the immense privilege of hearing these words of comfort and consolation from the lips of Jesus, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace." It is of the utmost importance for the saved sinner to be able to make a full confession unto salvation. It leads to an enlargement of the soul's knowledge, and a strengthening of the foundations of faith. Perhaps if any one had asked this woman, when on her way to Jesus, "Have you faith?"—she might have been staggered by the question, and have begun to look in at herself, and to raise all manner of questions. But if asked, "Do you believe that Jesus is able and willing to heal you?" her answer would have been clear and decided enough. True faith is never occupied with itself, but with its object, Christ. Thus it grows. This woman's faith was strengthened and her range of intelligence greatly enlarged by her full and clear confession of all that Jesus had done for her.

It is a great thing to make a bold confession. Many, we are aware, are deterred from so doing, by various reasons. Some are afraid to confess, lest they should lose caste. This is very poor indeed. If I have found Christ, I may well afford to lose caste. For what is caste? It is a certain standing, position, or rank in the world, and in nature. But the world is under judgment, and nature has been set aside by the death of Christ. Why, therefore, think of caste? My salvation rests upon that which has swept away for ever all the pillars upon which caste, position, or rank can possibly repose. The death of Christ

has not only put away my sins, but it has also removed the whole foundation of my standing as a man of the world. Hence, therefore, for me to talk about my position in the world, my standing in nature, my rank as a man, is to ignore the fact on which my salvation rests. I am not merely dead to sin, but dead to all that pertained to my condition as a descendant from Adam the first. If I belong to the Second Man for one thing, I belong to Him for everything. I cannot go to the last Adam for life and righteousness, and come back to the first Adam for standing and position in the world. It is wholly out of the question.

But, again, some are deterred from making a bold confession of Christ by the fear of breaking down. They have seen so much inconsistency and failure on the part of many high professors, that, lest they, too, should fail and prove inconsistent, they deem it better to keep quiet. This is a mistake. True, it is a mistake which we can well understand; but it is a mistake all the while, and it robs the soul of a large amount of spiritual privilege. Where there has been *contact with Christ*, there ought to be the bold *confession of Christ*, and then there will, assuredly, be enlarged *consolation from Christ*. We have only to confide in Jesus, and boldly tell out all the truth, then abounding peace and liberty will be the sure results.

But we must now, for a moment, accompany our blessed Lord and Saviour into

THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.

It is at once interesting and instructive to mark, that at the very moment in which the Lord was dismissing the poor woman with words of peace and consolation, a messenger arrived from the ruler's house, saying, "Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further?" This was in reality, a fiery dart from the wicked one to shake the ruler's confidence. He had come

to Jesus in the confidence of His ability and readiness to heal the sick, but could he trust Him to raise the dead? Could his faith carry him into the dreary domain of death and there enable him to gaze upon the Son of God acting in His glorious capacity as the Quickener of the dead?

We are not told what passed through the ruler's mind at the moment in which the depressing tidings of death fell upon his ear; but we can easily imagine a dark cloud passing over his spirit. But, ah! the tender, loving heart of Jesus was thinking of the poor, tried, and tempted one. His eye was upon him. He caught the earliest symptom of the gathering cloud: "And as soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, *Be not afraid, only believe.*" The Lord took no notice of the messenger. He thought only of the effect of the message upon the ruler's heart, and in His infinite grace, He immediately covered him with the shield of faith. "Be not afraid, only believe." Precious words! Words which can carry the soul through every difficulty and every danger—words for a sick bed or a chamber of death—words for all circumstances, all places, and all conditions—words of comfort and consolation for the poor sinking, fainting, tottering heart. "Be not afraid, only believe."

Dear christian reader, are you assaulted by dark thoughts of unbelief? Have you arrived at a point in your earthly path at which you see graver difficulties before you than you ever anticipated? Do you feel the dark waters of sorrow, trial, and temptation deepening around you, and the heavy clouds of unbelief and despondency gathering more thickly above you? Then, remember, the loving heart of Jesus is occupied about you. His eye is resting solicitously upon you. He knows what you are feeling. He sees every fiery dart that the tempter is levelling at you, and He says to you, as He said to the ruler, "Be not afraid, only believe"—"Hold fast the be-

ginning of your confidence firm unto the end"—"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward"—"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." What we want is confidence in God, come what may. Simple faith can lift the head above the deepest waters, and pierce through the thickest gloom that ever enwrapped the soul. It assures the heart that Jesus can as easily raise the dead as heal the sick; all is alike to Him. He can deliver from Satan's grasp, He can chase away disease, and He can gild the chamber of death with the bright and blessed beams of resurrection. He is a Deliverer, a Healer, and a Quickener, and surely He ought to be Lord. "Be not afraid, only believe." May these words fall with power on every doubting, trembling heart!

The closing lines of our chapter display to us the moral glories of Christ as the Quickener of the dead. Death, disease, and Satan all flee before the Majesty of His presence. We can track His marvellous path from scene to scene of this sin-stricken world, and, in every act, in every word, in every look, we see divine perfection. "He hath done all things well" must ever be the adoring language of our hearts. Nothing is beyond His power. Nothing escapes His tender care. "Talitha cumi," is the display of His Majesty; "Give her to eat," exhibits His tender, thoughtful care. The former bows the soul in worship; the latter melts the heart in grateful love.



THE SPIRIT'S TEACHING.

WHAT, then, does explain prophecy? That which explains all scripture—the Spirit of God alone. His power can unfold any part of the word of God. Do you ask, if I mean to say, that it is of no importance to know

languages, understand history, and so on? I am not raising a question about learning: it has its use; but I deny that history is the interpreter of prophecy, or of any scripture. And if there are Christians who know the history of the world, or the original tongues of Scripture, it is Christ that has to do with the spiritual intelligence, and not their knowledge or learning. Besides, even if men are Christians it does not necessarily follow that they understand Scripture. They know Christ, else they would not be Christians. But real entrance into God's mind, in Scripture, supposes that a person watches against self, desires the glory of God, has full confidence in His word, and dependence on the Holy Ghost. The understanding of Scripture is not a mere intellectual thing. If a man has no mind at all, he could not understand anything: but the mind is only the vessel—not the power. The power is the Holy Ghost acting upon and through the vessel; but it must be the Holy Ghost Himself that fills a soul. As it is said, "They shall be all taught of God."



MEDITATIONS ON THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

VER. 6. "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*" We have just seen, that in the riches of christian experience, the pilgrim saint becomes intimately acquainted both with joy and sorrow. This we have been taught both in the school of God, and by His written word.

And here I would have thee carefully note, O my soul, in thy meditations, that the pilgrim is now seen, not, as it were, with a cup in each hand, but with a guardian angel on each side. "Surely," he says, "*goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.*" And mark well

the first word he utters in this bursting forth of his heart's fulness; "Surely." Is not this an appropriate, a triumphant note of faith, after such deep and varied experience? There are no doubts, no fears, no uncertainty here. A quiet, happy confidence fills the soul; it is the full assurance of faith. It reminds one of the last word that the blessed Lord dropped into the ear of His Bride before He went away. "Surely," He says, "*Surely* I come quickly." Oh! that it had dropped into her heart, and maintained its right place there, until His return! The word of the Lord in the heart, and the Person of the Lord before the mind, will alone give the experience, faith, and victory of the Twenty-third Psalm.

How conscious the man of God is, as he journeys along, of the dignity of his companions. He is accompanied with royal honours. Not indeed like earth's mighty ones, with steel-clad attendants, which dazzle the human eye; but with the *goodness* and *mercy* of the living God. Such, we may say, is the pilgrim's body-guard as he journeys through the wilderness. And when faith has said this, what more can it say? Could heaven itself furnish more suitable companions for this chequered scene? Impossible! They are ever in attendance, always ready, equal to every emergency, more than a match for every foe; they are noble, high-born, invincible; yet gentle and kindly as the pure love of heaven. And this is no fancy picture; nothing can be more real to faith. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Do think of this, O my soul; here pause a little; meditate; let thy thoughts dwell on this blessed truth. Beware of thinking too much of thine own condition—thine own circumstances; but think rather, of thy heavenly attendants, "goodness and mercy:" and still more, think of Him who sends them, and for so long a time—"All the days of thy life." Canst thou speak any more of feeling, as it were,

alone in this world? Faith sees these messengers of love sent down from heaven, to guard and follow thee all thy pilgrim days. But why, it may be asked, fix on *goodness* and *mercy*? Because, "goodness" meets all our need; and "mercy" forgives all our faults. It is only with such that we can get along. The Good Shepherd has trod the sheep's path Himself, and He knows best what they need: not that He needed, in all respects, what we need; no, He was "without sin." But, as a man, He has walked the path, under Jehovah's care, along which His sheep and lambs are now passing. He goes before His flock; they follow Him.

There are three things connected with the Lord our Shepherd, which all the sheep of His pasture should know well. 1. He has gone through, in experience, the bitterest trials of the wilderness; so that He knows every step, every difficulty, every danger of the way, from having walked it Himself. 2. He died for the sheep. Having first gone over their path, He laid down His life for them. 3. He arose again from the dead to fold, watch over, and nourish the flock for which He died. Thus He is qualified in every way to be the Shepherd of God's sheep. Hence the beautiful doxology, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

In this beautiful sixth and closing verse, our pilgrim, whom we have followed so far and so closely both in his joys and in his sorrows, may be said to have reached a moral eminence, from which he surveys the past, the present, and the future. He is placed, as it were, at the centre of a circle. If we speak of christian position, the Christian, we know, is in Christ, and He is the centre of all

blessing and glory. And here, in this privileged place, the believer speaks only of *goodness* and *mercy* as to the whole of his wilderness life. He knows what joys and sorrows are. His experience has been great. He knows the green pastures and the quiet waters. He has tasted, too, the bitter waters of Marah, and waded through their depths. The shadows of death have darkened his path, and spread their gloom over everything in the valley. And he knows too, the rich provisions of the King's table—the royal banquet—the anointed head, and the overflowing cup. Nevertheless, in reviewing the past, in surveying the present, he can truly say, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." And in looking on to the future, the affection of the child, the love of home, can only see a Father's house: "*And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*"

"Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me :
And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be."

Our fellow pilgrim, with whom we must soon part, is now calmly and triumphantly anticipating his last change. His heart, with the prospect, overflows with joy and praise. All is bright; but the looked-for hour of his departure is the brightest of all, and certainly must be the happiest. Thus should it be with all Christians, and especially with those who have been taught of God, "TO WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN." This is the true hope of the Church; not death, though that may take place before the Lord comes. When the great truth of the Lord's second coming has its right place in the heart, the desire to depart becomes more the power of affection, than the bare belief of a doctrine. The Lord Himself, personally, is known and loved; and the heart longs to be with Him. It matters little whether the way be through the portals of death, or, with all saints, rapt in clouds

to meet Him in the air. (1 Thess. i. 9, 10. iv. 13—18.) Those who are taken home before the rapture, have the advantage of knowing the Lord in that separate state. This will be additional, and precious experience.

The position of the waiting Christian in this world, may be one of great interest and usefulness; and the ties that bind him to it, may be many and tender; still, when the eye of faith looks across the boundary line, and sees *who* are there, and *what* is there, the heart instinctively longs to join the happy throng. The loved one, or the many loved ones who have gone before, are especially thought of, though, there, the joy of each will be the joy of all. True, there will be *individuality*—perfect identity, but a perfect blessedness common to all.

“ We look to meet our brethren
 From every distant shore;—
 Not one shall seem a stranger,
 Though never seen before:
 With angel hosts attending,
 In myriads through the sky;—
 Yet 'midst them all, Thou only,
 O Lord, wilt fix the eye.”

And what grace, we may say, notwithstanding all our murmurings, to make the closing scene of our wilderness journey, the happiest, the calmest, and the brightest! Here the soul is near the Lord, and grace shines—faith triumphs—glory dawns—and praise abounds. Placed, as it were, on the margin of the two worlds, and seeing everything in the light of God's presence, divine goodness—unmixed goodness, crowns the whole path. Even as to his darkest earthly days, the pilgrim can see nothing now but the goodness and mercy of God. Everything is now lost sight of, but the constant, unfailing care of the Lord our Shepherd. He speaks only of the goodness that so wonderfully met all his daily need, and of the mercy that met all his daily failure.

But now the end comes—the scene closes—the Father's house is full in view. One eye alone is bright in that social circle—one heart alone is rejoicing. “*I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*” As one not long ago said to a tender hearted parent, who was greatly overcome with what seemed a last farewell: “Father—can't you—spare me?—I am only—going to Jesus—and you—shall soon follow.” Such were the soothing and remarkable words of a dear daughter who had reached the interesting age of nineteen, to an affectionate father. But who was calm—who was bright, in that touching scene? She only; and many other similar words she said, but these were uttered with a look of tender sympathy for her dear father, as she observed him sink down in his chair to give vent to a flood of tears. She now sought to comfort him who had so often read and prayed by her bedside. What grace from God! What mercy to a father—to a family! His be all the praise. It is but the deep, tender sympathy of the Good Shepherd, as He folds the lamb in His bosom.

And now, after many an hour's meditation with deep and mingled feelings, over our beautiful Twenty-third Psalm, we must leave it for other themes; but its lessons, in connection with a Father's hand, remain. He can engrave on the tablets of the heart, that which no waste of time can ever efface. The recollections of the past may draw a shade over the present, but the future is all, and only bright. The great thought in the closing words of the psalm is *home*. All the vicissitudes of the wilderness are over; and the only thought that now fills the mind is *home*—an eternal, happy home. “*I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*” There, the worn and weary pilgrim finds his perfect rest; there, the one who was a stranger on earth, finds his heavenly home; and there, the servant whose work is finished, enters into the joy of his Lord.

" There at our Saviour's side,
 In heaven our home !
 We shall be glorified ;
 Heaven is our home !
 There with the good and blest,
 Those we love most and best,
 We shall for ever rest,
 In heaven our home !"

The Lord grant, that both reader and writer may, in due time, reach that happy home! Of all thoughts—of all words, what can be sweeter to the heart than "Home, sweet home?" And, even now, may all who have followed us in our studies through the psalm, be able, in blessed experience, to say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."



THE CHRISTIAN AT HOME.

THOU'RT gone up above to the mansions of glory,
 Thy Saviour's loved voice has welcomed thee in ;
 No more the broad shadows that darkened earth's story,
 Shall sadden thy spirit with sorrow or sin.

Thou'rt gone up to swell the glad song of salvation,
 And praise to Jehovah, whose nature is love :
 Ah ! many a friend hast thou met, and relation,
 Inhabitants long of the regions above.

No longer thy harp is unstrung on the willow :
 Earth passed—heaven gained—never more wilt thou weep ;
 Into silvery ripples hath glided each billow,
 The " Arms everlasting" our loved one now keep.

Thine eyes are beholding the King in His beauty,
 Thine ears are attuned to new songs of renown,
 Thy one great delight is His will and His glory ;
 He carried *thy* sorrows, thou wearest *His* crown.

DECISION FOR CHRIST.

IN approaching the subject of "Decision for Christ," there are two or three obstacles which lie in our way—two or three difficulties which hang around the question, which we would fain remove, if possible, in order that the reader may be able to view the matter on its own proper ground, and in its own proper bearings.

In the first place, we encounter a serious difficulty in the fact that very few of us, comparatively, are in a condition of soul to appreciate the subject, or to suffer a word of exhortation thereon. We are, for the most part, so occupied with the question of our soul's salvation—so taken up with matters affecting ourselves, our peace, our liberty, our comfort, our deliverance from the wrath to come, our interest in Christ, that we have but little heart for aught that purely concerns Christ Himself—His Name—His Person—His cause—His glory.

There are, we may say, two things which lie at the foundation of all true decision for Christ, namely, a conscience purged by the blood of Jesus, and a heart that bows, with reverent submission, to the authority of His word, in all things. Now, we do not mean to dwell upon these things, in this paper; first, because we are anxious to get, at once, to our immediate theme; and, secondly, because by far the larger portion of the volumes of "Things New and Old" is devoted to the special object of establishing the conscience in the peace of the gospel, and in setting before the heart the paramount claims of the word of God. We merely refer to them here for the purpose of reminding the reader that they are absolutely essential materials in forming the basis of decision for Christ. If my conscience is ill at ease, if I am in doubt as to my salvation, if I am filled with "anxious thought" as to whether I am a child of God or not, decision for Christ

is out of the question. I must know that Christ died for me, before I can, intelligently and happily, live for Him.

So also if there be any reserve in the heart as to my entire subjection to the authority of Christ as my Lord and Master, if I am keeping some chamber of my heart, be it ever so remote, ever so small, closed against the light of His word, it must, of necessity, hinder my whole-hearted decision for Him in this world. In a word, I must know that *Christ is mine* and *I am His*, ere my course down here can be one of unswerving, uncompromising decision for Him. If the reader hesitates as to this, if he is still in doubt and darkness, let him pause, and turn directly to the cross of the Son of God, and hearken to what the Holy Spirit declares as to all those who simply put their trust therein. Let him drink into his inmost soul these words, "Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, *all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*" Yes, reader, these are the glad tidings for you. "*All from all,*" by faith in a crucified and risen Lord.

But we see another difficulty in the way of our subject. We greatly fear, that while we speak of decision for Christ, some of our readers may suppose that we are contending for some notion or set of notions of our own, that we are pressing some peculiar views or principles to which we vainly and foolishly venture to apply the imposing title of "Decision for Christ." All this we do most solemnly disclaim. The words which stand at the head of this paper are the simple expression of our thesis. We do not contend for mere attachment to sect, party, or denomination, for adherence to the doctrines or commandments of men. We write in the immediate presence of Him who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men, and we distinctly avow that our one object is to urge upon the christian reader the necessity of

decision for Christ. We would not, if we know ourselves, pen a single line to swell the ranks of a party, or draw over adherents to any particular doctrinal creed, or any special form of church polity. We are impressed with the conviction that where Christ has His right place in the heart, all will be right; and that, where He has not, there will be nothing right. And, further, we believe that nothing but plain decision for Christ can effectually preserve the soul from the fatal influences that are at work around us in the professing Church. Mere orthodoxy cannot preserve us. Attachment to religious forms will not avail in the present fearful struggle. It is, we feel persuaded, a simple question of Christ as our Life, and Christ as our Object. May the Spirit of God now enable us to ponder aright the subject of "Decision for Christ!"

It is well to bear in mind that there are certain great truths—certain immutable principles—which underlie all the dispensations of God, from age to age, and which remain untouched by all the failure, the folly, and the sin of man. It is on these great moral truths, these foundation principles, that faith lays hold, and in them finds its strength and its sustenance. Dispensations change and pass away—men prove unfaithful in their varied positions of stewardship and responsibility; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. It never changes, never fails. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." And, again, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Nothing can touch the eternal truth of God, and, therefore, what we want, at all times, is to give that truth its proper place in our hearts, to let it act on our conscience, form our character, and shape our way. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." This is true security. Here lies the real secret of decision for Christ. What God has spoken must govern us in the most

absolute manner, ere our path can be said to be one of plain decision. There may be tenacious adherence to our own notions, obstinate attachment to the prejudices of the age, a blind devotion to certain doctrines and practices resting on a traditionary foundation, certain opinions which we have received to hold without ever enquiring as to whether or not there be any authority whatever for such opinions in holy Scripture. There may be all this, and much more, and yet not one atom of genuine decision for Christ.

Now, we feel we cannot do better than furnish our readers with an example or two drawn from the page of inspired history, which will do more to illustrate and enforce our theme than aught that we could possibly advance. And first, then, let us turn to the book of Esther, and there contemplate, for a few moments, the instructive history of

“MORDECAI THE JEW.”

This very remarkable man lived at a time in which the Jewish economy had failed through the unfaithfulness and disobedience of the Jewish people. The Gentile was in power. The relationship between Jehovah and Israel could no longer be publicly acknowledged. The faithful Jew had but to hang his harp on the willows, and sigh over the faded light of other days. The chosen seed were in exile; the city and temple where their fathers worshipped were in ruins, and the vessels of the Lord's house were in a strange land. Such was the outward condition of things in the day in which Mordecai's lot was cast. But, in addition to this, there was a man, very near the throne, occupying only the second place in the empire, sitting beside the very fountain-head of authority, possessing princely wealth, and wielding almost boundless influence. To this great man, strange to say, the poor exiled Jew

sternly refuses to bow. Nothing will induce him to yield a single mark of respect to the second man in the kingdom. He will save the life of Ahasuerus; but he will not bow to Haman.

Reader, why was this? Was this blind obstinacy or bold decision—which? In order to determine this we must enquire as to the real root or principle of Mordecai's acting. If, indeed, there was no authority for his conduct in the law of God, then must we, at once pronounce it to have been blind obstinacy, foolish pride, or, it may be, envy of a man in power. But if, on the other hand, there be within the covers of the five inspired books of Moses, a plain authority for Mordecai's deportment in this matter, then must we, without hesitation, pronounce his conduct to have been the rare and exquisite fruit of attachment to the law of his God, and uncompromising decision for Him and His holy authority.

This makes all the difference. If it be merely a matter of private opinion—a question concerning which each one may lawfully adopt his own view—then, verily, might such a line of conduct be justly termed the most narrow-minded bigotry. We hear a great deal, now-a-days, about narrow-mindedness on the one hand, and large-heartedness on the other. But, as a Roman orator, over two thousand years ago, exclaimed in the senate-house of Rome, "Conscript Fathers, long since, indeed, we have lost the true names of things;" so may we, in the bosom of the professing Church, at the close of the nineteenth century, repeat, with far greater force, "Long since we have lost the true names of things." For what do men now call bigotry and narrow-mindedness? A faithful clinging to, and carrying out of, "Thus saith the Lord." And what do they designate large-heartedness? A readiness to sacrifice truth on the altar of politeness and civility.

Reader, be thou fully assured that thus it is at this solemn moment. We do not want to be sour or cynical,

morose, or gloomy. But we must speak the truth, if we are to speak at all. We desire that the tongue may be hushed in silence, and the pen may drop from the hand, if we could basely cushion the plain, bold, unvarnished truth, through fear of scattering our readers, or to avoid the sneer of the infidel. We cannot shut our eyes to the solemn fact that God's truth is being trampled in the dust; that the Name of Jesus is despised and rejected. We have only to pass from city to city, and from town to town, of highly-favoured England, and read upon the walls the melancholy proofs of the truth of our assertions. Truth is flung aside, in cold contempt. The Name of Jesus is little set by. On the other hand, man is exalted, his reason deified, his will indulged. Where must all this end? "In the blackness of darkness for ever."

How refreshing, in the face of all this, to ponder the history of Mordecai the Jew! It is very plain that he knew little and cared less about the thoughts of men on the question of narrow-mindedness. He obeyed the word of the Lord, and this we must be allowed to call real breadth of mind—true largeness of heart. For what, after all, is a narrow mind? A narrow mind we hold to be a mind which refuses to open itself to admit the truth of God. And what, on the contrary, is a large and liberal heart? A heart expanded by the truth and grace of God. Let us not be scared away from the path of plain decision, by the scornful epithets which men have bestowed upon that path. It is a path of peace and purity, a path where the light of an approving conscience is enjoyed, and upon which the beams of divine favour ever pour themselves in undimmed lustre.

But why did Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman? Was there any great principle at stake? Was it merely a whim of his own? Had he a "Thus saith the Lord" for his warrant in refusing a single nod of the head to the proud Amalekite? Yes. Let us turn to the seventeenth

chapter of the book of Exodus, and there we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar and called the name of it JEHOVAH-nissi; for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."*

Here, then, was Mordecai's authority for not bowing to Haman the Agagite. A faithful Jew could not do reverence to one with whom Jehovah was at war. The heart might plead a thousand excuses and urge a thousand reasons. It might seek an easy path for itself on the plea that the Jewish system was in ruins, and the Amalekite in power, and that therefore it was worse than useless, yea, it was positively absurd to maintain such lofty ground when the glory of Israel was gone, and the Amalekite was in the place of authority. "Of what use," it might be argued, "can it be to hold up the standard when all is gone to pieces? You are only making your degradation more remarkable by the pertinacious refusal to bow your head. Would it not be better to give just one nod? That will settle the matter. Haman will be satisfied, and you and your people will be safe. Do not be obstinate. Shew a tendency to be courteous. Do not stand up, in that dogged way, for a thing so manifestly non-essential. Besides, you should remember that the command in Exodus xvii. was only to be rehearsed in the ears of Joshua, and only had its true application in his bright and palmy days. It was never meant for the ears of an exile, never intended to apply in the days of Israel's desolation."

All this, and much beside, might have been urged on

* It is deeply interesting to note that neither the Jews' best Friend, nor their worst enemy is once formally named in the Book of Esther; but faith could recognize both the one and the other.

Mordecai; but, ah! the answer was simple. "God hath spoken. This is enough for me. True, we are a scattered people; but the word of the Lord is not scattered. He has not reversed His word about Amalek, nor entered into a treaty of peace with him. Jehovah and Amalek are still at war, and Amalek stands before me in the person of this haughty Agagite. How can I bow to one with whom Jehovah is at war? How can I do homage to a man whom the faithful Samuel would hew in pieces before the Lord?" "Well, then," it might be further urged upon this devoted Jew, "you will all be destroyed. You must either bow or perish." The answer is still most simple. "I have nothing to do with consequences. They are in the hand of God. Obedience is my path, the results are with Him. It is better to die with a good conscience than live with a bad one. It is better to go to heaven with an uncondemning heart, than remain upon earth with a heart that would make me a coward. God has spoken. I can do no otherwise. May the Lord help me! Amen."

Oh! how well we can understand the mode in which this faithful Jew would be assaulted by the enemy. Nothing but the grace of God can ever enable any one to maintain a deportment of unflinching decision, at a moment in which everything within and around is against us. True it is, we know that it is better to suffer anything than deny our Lord, or fly in the face of His commandments; but yet how little are some of us prepared to endure a single sneer, a single scornful look, a single contemptuous expression, for Christ's sake. And, perhaps, there are few things harder, for some of us at least, to bear than to be reproached on the ground of narrow-mindedness and bigotry. We naturally like to be thought large-hearted and liberal. We like to be accounted men of enlightened mind, sound judgment, and comprehensive grasp. But we must remember that we have no right to be liberal at our Master's expense. We have simply to obey.

Thus it was with Mordecai. He stood like a rock and allowed the whole tide of difficulty and opposition to roll over him. He would not bow to the Amalekite, let the consequence be what it might. Obedience was his path. The results were with God. And look at the result! In one moment, the tide was turned. The proud Amalekite fell from his lofty eminence, and the exiled Jew was lifted from his sackcloth and ashes and placed next the throne. Haman exchanged his wealth and dignities for a gallows; Mordecai exchanged his sackcloth for a royal robe.

Now, it may not always happen that the reward of simple obedience will be as speedy and as signal as in Mordecai's case. And, moreover, we may say that we are not Mordecais, nor are we placed in his position. But the principle holds good whoever and wherever we are. There is not one of us, however obscure or insignificant, that has not a sphere within which our influence is felt for good or for evil. And, besides, independent altogether of our circumstances and the apparent results of our conduct, we are called upon to obey implicitly the word of the Lord—to have His word hidden in our hearts—to refuse, with unswerving decision, to do or to say aught that the word of the living God condemns. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This should be the language, whether it be the question of a child tempted to steal a lump of sugar, or the most momentous step in evil that one can be tempted to take. The strength and moral security of Mordecai's position lay in this fact, that he had the word of God for his authority. Had it not been so, his conduct would have been senseless in the extreme. To have refused the usual expression of respect to one in high authority, without some weighty reason, could only be regarded as the most unmeaning obstinacy. But the moment you introduce a "Thus saith the Lord," the matter is entirely changed. The word of the Lord endureth for ever. The divine testimonies do not fade away or change

with the times and seasons. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of what our God hath spoken shall never pass away. Hence, what had been rehearsed in the ears of Joshua, as he rested in triumph under the banner of Jehovah, was designed to govern the conduct of Mordecai, though clothed in sackcloth as an exile, in the city of Shushan. Ages and generations had passed away; the days of the Judges and the days of the Kings had run their course; but the commandment of the Lord with respect to Amalek had lost—could lose—none of its force. “The Lord *hath sworn* that the Lord will have war with Amalek,” not merely in the days of Joshua, nor in the days of the Judges, nor in the days of the Kings, but “from generation to generation.” Such was the record—the imperishable and immutable record of God, and such was the plain, solid, and unquestionable foundation of Mordecai’s conduct.

And here let us say a few words as to the immense importance of entire submission to the word of God. We live in a day which is plainly marked by strong self-will. Man’s reason, man’s will, and man’s interest are working together, with appalling success, to ignore the authority of holy Scripture. So long as the statements of the word of God chime in with man’s reason, so long as they do not run counter to his will, and are not subversive of his interests, so long he will tolerate them, or it may be he will quote them with a measure of respect, or, at least, with self-complacency; but the moment it becomes a question of Scripture *versus* reason, will, or interest, the former is either silently ignored or contemptuously rejected. This is a very marked and solemn feature of the days that are now passing over our heads. It behoves Christians to be aware of it, and to be on their watchtower. We fear that very few comparatively are truly alive to the real state of the moral atmosphere which enwraps the religious world. We do not refer here so much to the bold attacks of infidel writers. To these we have alluded elsewhere. What

we have now before us is rather the cool indifference, on the part of professing Christians, as to Scripture; the little power which pure truth wields over the conscience; the way in which the edge of Scripture is blunted or turned aside. You quote passage after passage from the inspired Volume, but it seems like the pattering of rain upon the window; the *reason* is at work, the *will* is dominant, *interest* is at stake, human opinions bear sway, God's truth is practically, if not in so many words, set aside.

All this is deeply solemn. We know of few things more dangerous than intellectual familiarity with the letter of Scripture where the spirit of it does not govern the conscience, form the character, and shape the way. We want to tremble at the word of God, to bow down, in reverential submission, to its holy authority, in all things. A single line of Scripture ought to be sufficient for our souls, on any point, even though, in carrying it out, we should have to move athwart the opinions of the highest and best of men. May the Lord raise up many faithful and true-hearted witnesses in these last days—men like the faithful Mordecai who would rather ascend a gallows than bow to an Amalekite!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



A CASE OF INTEREST.

SOME time since I heard from the lips of a young friend of mine, residing, at that time, in Ireland, a very interesting statement of the circumstances of his conversion; and as it is not unlikely that his case may illustrate the real condition of many, I feel led to record it for the readers of "Things New and Old."

My young friend had been trained, from his earliest days, in strict morality, but without one spark of light as to Jesus and His salvation. His religion was cold and dreary. He had nothing to meet the need of the soul.

The atmosphere in which he lived was intensely worldly. To make money was the grand object of his parents and friends.

It pleased the Lord, however, to visit this precious soul with the convicting grace of His Holy Spirit. He became really anxious about his eternal interests, and, in his anxiety, he thought he would seek for some spiritual advice from a christian friend. Accordingly, he went to this friend and opened his heart to him. He told him of his exercises, and asked him what he ought to do. "Well," said this friend, "you can do nothing. All your efforts are useless. You must just *wait* until God's time comes, and then, but not until then, you will get what you are seeking." My young friend enquired how long he might have to wait; but this, of course, his adviser could not tell;—who could?

Now, there was a measure of truth in this advice; but it was truth entirely out of place. To use a medical figure, the prescription was good enough in itself, but it was not suited for the case, and, consequently, gave the patient no relief whatever. This spiritual adviser was wholly unfit to deal with an exercised soul. He prescribed theology in place of ministering Christ. Alas! alas! this is too often the case.

Well, my poor young friend was as unhappy as ever; and he thought he would betake himself to another physician belonging to a totally different school of medicine. He did so, and opened his heart to him and asked him what he should do to be saved. "Oh! said he, "you must *knock*. 'Knock and it shall be opened unto you.'" "How long am I to knock?" enquired my friend. Of course, no one can tell that. He must just continue knocking; and, in due time, it should be opened.

Here, again, we see misplaced truth. No doubt, it is all quite right for those who want to get in to knock at the door; but is this the advice to give to an anxious enquirer after salvation? Is such an one to be told either to *wait*, in dark uncertainty, on the one hand, or to *knock*, in hope-

less effort, on the other? Are there no glad tidings to declare to poor anxious souls? Has the Son of God died on the cross, and finished there the work of redemption, merely to leave a soul waiting or knocking? For what have I to wait, or to knock? Has not Jesus finished the work? Yes; blessed be His name, all is done, and hence both these spiritual counsellors were defective in their advice, and they left their friend as miserable as they found him. He assured me he continued for three years knocking, and got nothing. At length he went to a third adviser, and he at once told him, "You are all wrong together. You have neither to *wait* nor to *knock*, but simply to *believe* and be saved—saved on the spot—saved for ever." Blessed news! Precious tidings! How welcome to a poor, harassed soul, just emerging out of a cold, dreary, misty formalism, and perplexed by the conflicting counsel of theological advisers, to be told, on God's authority, that all is done, that sin has been put away, that salvation is as free as the air he breathes, free as the sunbeams that fall upon his path, free as the dewdrops that refresh the earth, or as the perfume that emanates from the hedges-rows. My dear young friend drank in the glad message. He found peace. He was set free. The waiting and the knocking gave place to a joyous believing. He found Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. He grasped by faith the precious casket, and found therein all he wanted for time and for eternity.

" Salvation in that Name is found,
Cure for my grief and care ;
A healing balm for every wound ;
All, all I want is there."

Oh! that all who have to do with anxious souls may learn how to deal with them! May they point them to Jesus, and not perplex them with theology.

THE GOSPEL, AND ITS RESULTS.

WHEN God gave His law from Mount Sinai, He addressed it to one nation only, and that a very small nation, "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises." (Rom. ix. 4.) But these revelations were confined to Israel. They had a priesthood within, but no ministry going out. Doubtless the presence of God in Israel would be felt in some measure by the nations around, but the Jewish system was not a missionary one; rather, they were walled in. But we would not forget that the day will come, when they will be, in the truest sense, a missionary people. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." And of the spared remnant in the latter day, we read, "I will send those that escape of them to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory, and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles." (Isaiah ii. 3; lxvi. 19.) But these happy days for the now despised Jew, we need not say, are still future. The Church—the present vessel of testimony—must be off the scene, and Israel restored, before the activities of God's love are thus displayed in His ancient people. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*" The Church, which is His body—His *fulness*—must first be completed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then shall the joyous prediction be fulfilled, "And so all Israel shall be saved." Rom. xi. 25, 26; 1 Thess. iv. 13—18.

Lord, hasten these promised, and longed-for days, in thy good time, that a groaning creation may be relieved—

that thy name may be excellent in all the earth, and thy glory set above the heavens.

“JOY to His ancient people!
Your bonds He comes to sever—
And now, 'tis done! the Lord hath won,
And ye are free for ever.

JOY to the ransomed nations!
The foe, the ravening lion,
Is bound in chains while Jesus reigns
King of the earth in Zion.

JOY to the Church triumphant,
The Saviour's throne surrounding!
They see His face, adore His grace,
O'er all their sin abounding—

Crowned with the mighty victor,
His royal glory sharing;
Each fills a throne, His name alone
To heaven and earth declaring.”

In the proclamation of the gospel, which is our present theme, we have the perfect contrast to the giving of the law. God, in making known the full gospel of His grace, after the death and resurrection of Christ, commands that it be preached, not to one nation only, but to all the nations of the earth. “According to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” (Rom. xvi. 26) The middle wall of partition was broken down by the cross, and the barriers of the ancient economy swept away. The gospel of God's grace now flows on like the rising wave, and overflows all Jewish limits—all lands. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Rom. v. 20.

The good news of a full and free salvation, through faith in Christ, is thus preached to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. “Be it known therefore unto you,” said Paul

to his brethren the Jews, "that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (Acts xxviii. 28.) Nothing can be wider in its aspect than our Lord's commission to His disciples. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 16.) Neither is it addressed to us in the form of a *promise*, but of a *proclamation*. This makes an immense difference. Salvation is preached as a present reality to all who own Christ by faith, and put their trust in Him. At the same time, it is also true that all the promises are ours in Christ, from the moment that we have faith in His name. As in the case of Rebekah; when she consented to marry Isaac, she became a joint-heir with him of Abraham's riches. But had she refused Isaac, she must have remained penniless, so far as Abraham was concerned. All depended on her accepting Isaac—all depends on our receiving Christ. This is the point of all importance. The apostle presents it in the plainest manner possible. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." (Acts xiii. 38.) Forgiveness is not *promised*, observe, on certain conditions, but *preached*, or *proclaimed*, through Christ, to all who hear its joyous sound. Those, of course, who believe the glad tidings *are* forgiven. They are plainly told so. And to make assurance, as it were, doubly sure, the apostle adds, "And by him, all that believe *are justified* from all things." If the word of God, thus distinctly and fully set before us, is believed, peace, as a matter of course, must be enjoyed.

The responsibility of hearing such a gospel is indeed great, and the results are beyond all conception important; they are eternal, either in a state of happiness or misery.

If the gospel of the grace of God be thus proclaimed to all, and the salvation which it brings free to all, it necessarily follows, that all who hear it, must, in God's sight, be either receivers or rejecters of His love. There is no

middle ground in Scripture. The merely careless hearer may not think that he is either despising or rejecting the offer of salvation; but, surely, to be indifferent in a matter of such unspeakable interest to God, and of such unspeakable importance to man, is, in some respects, the most guilty treatment of the message. To hear plainly set forth the pressing invitations of redeeming love—the great work of Christ for us—the value of the immortal soul—the ineffable blessedness of heaven—the unutterable torments of hell, and, after all, to go away in a state of careless indifference, is, in the strongest sense, to despise what has been said.

Many, we are aware, go to hear the gospel or a sermon, as a religious duty, and when they have done so, think themselves all the better for doing it. They are satisfied with having been present on such an occasion; but the thought of being responsible for either accepting or refusing the message, never enters their mind. This, alas! is the lamentable condition of thousands. But we must not forget to add, that the fault may not be *altogether* in the hearers. That which they have been listening to, may be little calculated either to arrest the attention, or touch the heart and conscience. All that has been said may be true, but unsuitable for the unconverted, and unfitted to awaken the soul that is asleep in sin. Hence the solemn responsibility of the preacher! Lord, grant to all thy workmen, the needed love, zeal, and earnestness for this great work, that they may be “pure from the blood of all men.”

We would now make a few remarks as to the gospel itself; and in the first place we would refer to

THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL.

It is called “the gospel of God,” (Rom. i. 1,) which means that it has its source in God. It is also called “the gospel of Christ,” because it reveals Him; but here the

apostle is speaking of the *Author* of the gospel, not its subject. This is a great and blessed truth, and one of immense power in the work of evangelization. He who is the object of man's natural fear and dread, reveals Himself as the fountain of all His blessing. It is the first thought in the first epistle. And this epistle, too, more than any other, is addressed to both Jew and Gentile—to man as such. Its solemn address is to "the whole world." But before God's judgment is given on man's condition, His love to man himself is fully revealed. The lost sinner is assured that the spring of his salvation is the heart of God—that the One whom he so fears—so seeks in every way to avoid, is the Author of all his mercies, and the One who meets him in the gospel with all the blessings of His grace. What a thought! What a truth! What a gospel! The God of all grace goes out in His own goodness—in the activities of His own nature, with the joyous message of salvation to the chief of sinners. But still He holds to the *one way*—"through this man." This is the *only way*. No blessing can come to any sinner but through Christ—in Christ—with Christ. "What think ye of Christ?" is the Father's one question. His grand object in the gospel, is the honour and glory of His Son. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This is the test. God will never yield this point to the sinner.

Hence it is that many quickened souls go without peace for years, and, in many cases, all their earthly days. The Scriptures say, plainly enough, "Through this man"—"By him." Own Christ—honour Christ—look to Christ—confide in Christ—give Him your thoughts—your affections—your worship—and what then? Why, every blessing that is in the Father's heart to give is yours. He will bless you with Christ's own portion—with that which is due to Him; He will make you—what? "An heir of God,

a joint-heir with Christ." But, of course, the truth must be believed before it can be enjoyed. And herein lies the point at issue between God and the soul. The doubting, unhappy soul says, "If I could *feel* that these blessings were mine—O, if I could only realize that I am interested in them, I should be the happiest soul on earth." Such a case has been so often stated, and so often answered, that it is not a little humbling to have to face it again and again; nay, daily and hourly. And still there is no answer but the old one—"Look to Jesus, and believe God's word."

But so long as the soul keeps looking to its feelings, both Christ and the word of God, in a practical point of view, go for nothing. All that God reveals to us of His love—all that Christ has done and suffered for us—all that the Spirit bears witness to, are practically set aside, that the *feelings* may have undisputed authority over the poor, distressed, unhappy soul. What a fearful state of things this is, and yet it is the most common in Christendom! But God cannot alter His word. There it is written, "Kiss the Son"—be reconciled to the Son—be friends with the Son—make everything of the Son—and what then? Let the word of God answer: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." And, surely, when God says, "Blessed," *blessed* it shall indeed be! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.) And, surely, O doubting, fearing soul, Christ is fit to be trusted, whatever our feelings may be—nay, in spite of our feelings; ought we not to be ashamed of ourselves, when we cannot trust the One that loves us, and died for us, and lives again in power and glory. And if we do but simply trust Him, the feelings will come all right. Let every doubt and fear then *perish*—yes, perish for ever, in the presence of a love which nothing could

turn aside from its object—in the presence of a work that is finished—in the presence of a Saviour who has all power in heaven and on earth; and whose love knows no change.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



THE RIVER OF MERCY.

PRAISE, praise ye the name of Jehovah our God,
 Declare, oh, declare ye, His glories abroad;
 Proclaim ye His mercy from nation to nation,
 Till the uttermost islands have heard His salvation!
 For His love floweth on, free and full as a river,
 And His mercy endureth for ever and ever.

Praise, praise ye the Lamb who for sinners was slain,
 Who went down to the grave and ascended again;
 And who soon shall return, when these dark days are o'er,
 To set up His kingdom in glory and power.
 For His love floweth on, free and full as a river,
 And His mercy endureth for ever and ever.

Then the heavens, and the earth, and the sea shall rejoice,
 The field and the forest shall lift the glad voice,
 The sands of the desert shall flourish in green,
 And Lebanon's glory be shed o'er the scene.
 For His love floweth on, free and full as a river,
 And His mercy endureth for ever and ever.

Her bridal attire and her festal array,
 All nature shall wear on that glorious day;
 For her King cometh down with His people to reign,
 And His presence shall bless her with Eden again.
 For His love floweth on, free and full as a river,
 And His mercy endureth for ever and ever.



DECISION FOR CHRIST.

(PART II.)

FOR the further illustration of our theme, we shall ask the reader to turn to the sixth chapter of the book of Daniel. There is a special charm and interest in the history of these living examples presented to us in the Holy Scriptures. They tell us how the truth of God was acted upon, in other days, by men of like passions with ourselves; they prove to us that in every age, there have been men who so prized the truth, so revered the word of the living God, that they would rather face death, in its most appalling forms, than depart one hair's breadth from the narrow line laid down by the authoritative voice of their Lord and Master. It is healthful to be brought in contact with such men—healthful at all times, but peculiarly so in days like the present, when there is so much laxity and easy-going profession—so much of mere theory—when every one is allowed to go his own way, and hold his own opinion, provided always that he does not interfere with the opinions of his neighbour—when the commandments of God seem to have so little weight, so little power over the heart and conscience. Tradition will get a hearing; public opinion will be respected; anything and everything, in short, but the plain and positive statements of the word of God, will get a place in the thoughts and opinions of men. At such a time, it is, we repeat, at once, healthful and edifying to muse over the history of men like Mordecai the Jew, and Daniel the prophet, and scores of others, in whose estimation a single line of holy scripture rose far above all the thoughts of men, the decrees of governors, and the statutes of kings, and who declared plainly that they had nothing whatever to do with consequences where the word of the Lord was concerned. Absolute submission to the divine command is that which alone becomes the creature.

It is not, be it observed and well remembered, that any man or any number of men have any right to demand subjection to their decisions or decrees; this would be most strongly deprecated. No man has any right to enforce his opinions upon his fellow. This is plain enough and we have to bless God for the inestimable privilege of civil and religious liberty, as enjoyed under the government of England. But what we urge upon our readers, just now, is plain decision for Christ, and implicit subjection to His authority, irrespective of everything, and regardless of consequences. This is what we do most earnestly desire for ourselves and for all the people of God, in these last days. We long for that condition of soul, that attitude of heart, that quality of conscience, which shall lead us to bow down in implicit subjection to the commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. No doubt, there are difficulties, stumbling-blocks, and hostile influences to be encountered. It may be said, for instance, that "It is very difficult for one, now-a-days, to know what is really true and right. There are so many opinions and so many ways, and good men differ so in judgment about the simplest and plainest matters, and yet they all profess to own the Bible as the only standard of appeal; and, moreover, they all declare that their one desire is to do what is right, and to serve the Lord, in their day and generation. How, then, is one to know what is true or what is false, seeing that you will find the very best of men ranged on opposite sides of the same question?"

The answer to all this is very simple. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." But, most assuredly, my eye is not single if I am looking at men, and reasoning on what I see in them. A single eye rests simply on the Lord and His word. Men differ, no doubt—they have differed, and they ever will differ; but I am to hearken to the voice of my Lord, and do His will. His word is to be my light and my authority, the girdle of my

joins in action, the strength of my heart in service, my only warrant for moving hither and thither, the stable foundation of all my ways. If I were to attempt to shape my way according to the thoughts of men, where should I be? How uncertain and unsatisfactory would my course be! Thank God, He has made it all plain—so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein; and all I want is a single eye, a subject will, a teachable spirit, to be led aright. If I really want to be guided aright, my God will surely guide me; but if I am looking to men, if I am governed by mixed motives, if I am seeking my own ends and interests, if I am seeking to please my fellows, then, undoubtedly, my body shall be full of darkness, heavy clouds shall settle down upon my pathway, and uncertainty mark all my goings.

Christian reader, think of these things. Think deeply of them. Depend upon it, they have a just claim upon your attention. Do you earnestly desire to follow your Lord? Do you really aim at something beyond mere empty profession, cold orthodoxy, or mechanical religiousness? Do you sigh for reality, depth, energy, fervour, and whole-heartedness? Then make Christ your one object, His word your rule, His glory your aim. Oh! that thus it may be with the writer and the reader of these lines. Alas! alas! how we have failed in these things, God only knows. But, blessed be His Name, there is full forgiveness with Him, and He giveth more grace, so that we can count upon Him to restore our souls, to revive His work in our hearts, and grant us a closer walk with Him than we have ever known before. May the blessed Spirit be pleased to use for the furtherance of these ends our meditation on the interesting narrative of

“DANIEL THE PROPHET.”

“It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel

was first; that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion or fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." (Dan. vi. 1—4.)

What a testimony! How truly refreshing to the heart! "No error or fault!" Even his most bitter enemies could not put their finger upon a single blemish in his character, or a flaw in his practical career. Truly this was a rare and admirable character—a bright witness for the God of Israel, even in the dark days of the Babylonish captivity—an unanswerable proof of the fact that no matter where we are situated, or how we are circumstanced, no matter how unfavourable our position, or how dark the day in which our lot is cast, it is our happy privilege so to carry ourselves, in all the details of daily life as to give no occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully.

How sad when it is otherwise! How humiliating when those who make a high profession are found constantly breaking down in the most commonplace affairs of domestic and commercial life! There are few things which more tend to discourage the heart than to hear—as, alas! one so often does—that Christians, so-called, are the most unsatisfactory persons to have any dealings with—that they are bad masters, or bad servants, or bad tradesmen—that they do not attend to their business, that they charge higher prices and give worse value than those who make no profession at all. It is most deplorable when any just ground is afforded for such statements.

No doubt worldly people are only too ready to find occasion against those who profess the Name of Jesus; and, further, we have to remember that there are two sides to every question, and that, very frequently, a broad

margin must be left for exaggeration, high colouring, and false impressions. But still, it is the Christian's plain duty so to walk in every position and relationship of life, as that "no error or fault" may be found in him. We should not make any excuses for ourselves. The duties of our situation, whatever it may happen to be, should be scrupulously performed. A careless manner, a slovenly habit, an unprincipled mode of acting, on the part of a Christian, is a serious damage to the cause of Christ and a dishonour to His holy Name. And, on the other hand, diligence, earnestness, punctuality, and fidelity, bring glory to that Name. And this should ever be the Christian's object. He should not aim at his own interest, his own reputation, or his own progress, in seeking to carry himself aright in his family and in his calling in life. True, it will promote his interest, establish his reputation, and further his progress to be upright and diligent in all his ways; but none of these things should ever be his motive. He is to be ever and only governed by the one thing, namely, to please and honour his Lord and Master. The standard which the Holy Ghost has set before us, as to all these things, is furnished in the words of the apostle to the Philippians: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." We should not be satisfied with anything less than this. "They could find none occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." Noble testimony! Would that it were more called forth, in this our day, by the deportment, the habits, the temper, and ways of all those who profess and call themselves Christians.

But there was one point in which Daniel's enemies felt they could lay hold of him. "Then said these men, we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning *the law of his God.*" Here was a something in the which occasion might be

found to ruin this beloved and honoured servant of God. It appears that Daniel had been in the habit of praying three times a day, with his window open toward Jerusalem. This fact was well known, and was speedily laid hold of, and turned to account. "Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore King Darius signed the writing and the decree."

Here, then, was a deep plot, a subtle snare, laid for the blameless and harmless Daniel. How would he act in the face of all this? Would he not feel it right to lower the standard? Well, if the standard were something of his own, he might surely lower it, and perhaps he ought. But if it were something divine—if his conduct were based upon the truth of God, then, clearly, it was his place to hold it up as high as ever, regardless of statutes, decrees, and writings established, signed, and countersigned. The whole question hinged upon this. Just as in the case of Mordecai the Jew, the question hinged upon the one point of whether he had any divine warrant for refusing to bow to Haman; so, in the case of Daniel the prophet, the question was, had he any divine authority for praying toward Jerusalem. It certainly seemed strange and odd. Many might have felt disposed to say to him, "Why persist in this practice? What need is there for opening your window and praying toward Jerusalem, in such a public manner? Can you not wait until night has drawn her sable curtain around you, and your closet door has shut you in, and then pour out your heart to your God? This

would be prudent, judicious, and expedient. And, surely, your God does not exact this of you. He does not regard time, place, or attitude. All times and places are alike to Him. Are you wise — are you right, in persisting in such a line of action, under such circumstances? It was all well enough before this decree was signed, when you could pray when and as you thought right; but now it does seem like the most culpable fatuity and blind obstinacy, to persevere; it is as though you really courted martyrdom."

All this, and much more we may easily conceive, might be suggested to the mind of the faithful Jew; but still the grand question remained, "What saith the Scripture?" Was there any divine reason for Daniel's praying toward Jerusalem? Assuredly there was! In the first place, Jehovah had said to Solomon, in reference to the temple at Jerusalem, "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." Jerusalem was God's centre. It was, it is, and ever shall be. True, it was in ruins--the temple was in ruins; but God's word was not in ruins, and here is faith's simple but solid warrant. King Solomon had said, at the dedication of the temple, hundreds of years before Daniel's time, "If thy people sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captive unto a land far off or near. Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee, in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly. If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captive, and pray *toward their land*, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and *toward the city* which thou hast chosen, and *toward the house* which I have built for thy name, then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place,

their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee." 2 Chron. vi. 36—39.

Now, this was precisely what Daniel was doing—this was the ground he took. He was a captive exile, but his heart was at Jerusalem, and his eyes followed his heart. If he could not sing the songs of Zion, he could at least breathe his prayers toward Zion's hill. If his harp was on the willows of Babylon, his fond affections turned toward the city of God, now a heap of ruins, but ere long to be an eternal excellency, the joy of the whole earth. It mattered not to him that a decree had been signed by earth's greatest monarch, forbidding him to pray toward the city of his fathers and to his fathers' God. It mattered not to him that the lions' den was yawning to receive him, and the lions' jaws ready to devour him. Like his brother Mordecai, he had nothing to do with consequences. Mordecai would rather mount the gallows than bow to Haman, and Daniel would rather descend the lions' den than cease to pray to Jehovah. These, surely, were the worthies—the spiritual giants of other days. They were men of the right stamp—real, downright, thorough-going, men—men whose hearts and consciences were governed absolutely by the word of God. The world may dub them bigots and fools; but, oh! how the heart does long for such bigots and fools, in these days of false liberality and wisdom!

It might have been said to Mordecai and Daniel that they were contending for mere trifles—for things wholly indifferent and non-essential. This is an argument often used; but, ah! it has no weight with an honest and a devoted heart. Indeed there is nothing more contemptible, in the judgment of every true lover of Jesus, than the principle that regulates the standard as to essentials and non-essentials. For, what is it? Simply this, "All that concerns my salvation is essential; all that merely affects

the glory of Christ is non-essential." How terrible is this! Reader, dost thou not utterly abhor it? What! shall we accept salvation as the fruit of our Lord's death, and deem aught that concerns Him non-essential? God forbid. Yea; rather let us entirely reverse the matter, and regard all that concerns the honour and glory of the Name of Jesus, the truth of His word, and the integrity of His cause, as vital, essential, and fundamental; and all that merely concerns ourselves as non-essential and indifferent. May God grant us this mind! May nothing be deemed trivial by us which has for its foundation the word of the living God!

Thus it was with those devoted men whose history we have been glancing at. Mordecai would not bow his head, and Daniel would not close his window. Blessed men! The Lord be praised for such, and for the inspired record of their actings. Mordecai would rather surrender life than diverge from the truth of God, and Daniel would rather do the same than turn away from God's centre. Jehovah had said that He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, and therefore Mordecai would not bow. Jehovah had said of Jerusalem, "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually;" therefore Daniel would not cease to pray toward that blessed centre. The word of the Lord endureth for ever, and faith takes its stand on that imperishable foundation. There is an eternal freshness about every word that has come forth from the Lord. His truth holds good throughout all generations; its bloom can never be brushed away, its light can never fade, its edge can never be blunted. All praise be to His holy Name!

But, let us look, for a moment, at the result of Daniel's faithfulness. The king was plunged in the deepest grief when he discovered his mistake. "He was sore displeased with himself." So well he might. He had fallen into a snare; but Daniel was in good keeping. It was all right

with him. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is *safe*." It matters not whether it be a lion's den at Babylon or a prison at Philippi, faith and a good conscience can make a man happy in either. We question if Daniel ever spent a happier night on this earth, than the night which he spent in the lions' den. He was there for God, and God was there with him. He was there with an approving conscience and an uncondemning heart. He could look up from the very bottom of that den straight into heaven, yea, that den was heaven upon earth to his happy spirit. Who would not rather be Daniel in the den than Darius in the palace? The one happy in God; the other "sore displeased with himself." Darius would have every one pray to him; Daniel would pray to none but God. Darius was bound by his own rash decree; Daniel was bound only by the word of the living God. What a contrast!

And then see in the end, what signal honour was put upon Daniel. He stood publicly identified with the one living and true God. "O Daniel," cried the king, "servant of the living God." Truly he had earned this title for himself. He was, unquestionably, a devoted and decided servant of God. He had seen his three brethren cast into a furnace because they would worship *only* the true God, and he had been cast into the lions' den because he would pray *only* to Him; but the Lord had appeared for them and him, and given them a glorious triumph. He had allowed them to realize that precious promise made of old to their fathers, that they should be the head and their enemies the tail; that they should be above and their enemies below. Nothing could be more marked—nothing could more forcibly illustrate the value which God puts upon plain decision and true-hearted devotedness, no matter where, when, or by whom exhibited.

Oh! for an earnest heart in this day of lukewarmness!
O Lord, revive thy work!

THE GOSPEL, AND ITS RESULTS.

(Continued from page 120.)

But there may be some who do trust in Jesus, and who are yet far from being happy. Why is this? The heart may be really trusting Christ, as every believer does, however feebly; but the full truth of God is not believed. In place of looking to Jesus, and then to the word of God, they look to Jesus and then to themselves. They think that if their prayers were answered, they must have the feelings of peace, assurance, or whatever it may be that they are waiting for. But if these feelings are not experienced, they conclude that the answer has not come—that God is not regarding them, and that peace is further off than ever. This is a snare of Satan.

An interesting circumstance was reported by a missionary years ago, of an old African chief, which illustrates this point. He was converted in his old age, after a life such as heathen chiefs usually live. His desire to learn to read was great, that he might read for himself about Jesus—the Jesus who loved Africans and died for them. He was shewn the way, he persevered, and, so far, he succeeded. One day as the missionary was passing along, he saw the aged chief sitting under a palm tree. He paused; he observed a book lying open on his knees. After looking on the book a little, he raised his head, clasped his hands, and looked up, as if conversing with some one in heaven. After a few moments, he turned his eyes again to the book. The scene was too sacred for the missionary to intrude; so he passed on without disturbing him. Sometime after, when he had an opportunity, he reminded him of what he had witnessed, and asked him what he was doing? “O, Massa,” he replied, “when me look down on the book and read, then God talk to me; and when me stop and look up,

me talk to God." May both reader and writer profit by the old chief's example.

This is what we want every anxious soul to do. Look up—look on—never within. In place of looking *within*, after looking up to Jesus, look on the book, read God's answer in His own book; His word is definite and never changes. Faith's object is never within, but *always* outside of self. And what does the book say to every soul that looks to Jesus?—"saved." "Look unto me and be ye saved." And what does it say to those who come to Jesus under a deep sense of their sin and unworthiness, and can only cast themselves on His mercy? The answer is ready, listen, and, O, believe. "Thy sins are forgiven—thy faith hath saved thee—go in peace." (Luke vii. 36—50.) And so for every case, there is the ready answer in God's book. An awakened soul, in the depths of heathen darkness, and in a state of despair, through conscious guilt, may cry out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Can there be an answer in God's book for such an one? Can there be salvation on the spot for such an one? Most assuredly there is! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But what could the Philippian jailor know of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of faith in Him? Scarcely anything, we may be sure. Nevertheless the salvation of his soul did not depend on his knowledge, but on Christ. At such a moment there was no time to lose or to explain. Hence, the apostle, with a readiness and an energy suited to the moment, exclaims, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." As if he had said, "Cast thyself on the Saviour of sinners—throw thyself this moment—as thou art—where thou art—on the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe that thou art safe, trusting in Him." He believed the apostle's word—was saved—then instructed—then rejoiced, and brought forth abundantly the fruits of faith. His noble example was blest to the saving of his house. Another may

come as a prodigal, who has sinned against knowledge, love, and every form of kindness; the answer perfectly suits the condition. He is welcomed with open arms, and with the kiss of perfect reconciliation. Thus every prodigal is welcomed. To say "No," would be to contradict the word of God; and, worse still; it would be, in effect, to say, that it misleads. But, in "the gospel of God," He acts from Himself, and of Himself, and for His own glory. The Father goes out to meet the prodigal son. His heart overflows with compassion while the son is yet a great way off, and He must run to meet him. A father's heart is a father's heart after all. "God is love;" and will act worthy of Himself in spite of our unbelief.

The prevailing thought in almost all minds that are not at rest about their salvation, is as to *what they ought to be for God*, in place of *what God is for them*. This is one of Satan's most subtle snares. But supposing the Philippian jailor had begun to reason with Paul about what he had been, and how he then felt, in place of simply believing his word, and at once trusting all to Christ; what would have been the result? Only misery in place of joy. And so it must be in every case. This is the grand mistake of multitudes, and one that is the fruitful source of endless troubles, and in a thousand different ways. The former is the principle of law, the latter of grace. The spirit of law, in the nature of things, throws the soul back on itself, to look for something there, that will suit the requirement, so long therefore, as the exercised soul keeps looking within for this something, the principle of law is at work. On the other hand, grace reveals Christ to the soul as its proper object, and not only so, but *the believer's place in Him*.

Christ having met all the requirements of God, and all the necessities of the sinner, faith finds perfect rest in His finished work. When Christ is thus known by the believer, He becomes the object of his supreme delight, his refuge

in all troubles, and his answer to all questions. He very naturally says, "The One who so loves me as to die for me, is worthy of all my trust!" But in the proportion that a soul is taken up with what it ought to be for God, grace is lost sight of, which, in plain terms, is to lose sight of the work of Christ, our acceptance in Him, and the testimony of God's word to us as *one with Him*.

But it may be urged, that God has His claims on man, and that though Israel only, as a nation, was formally and definitely put under the law at Sinai, yet it surely is of universal application. Most true, as to human conduct, but the covenant of Sinai is not the gospel of the grace of God. The former required a righteousness from man, the latter brings a divine righteousness to the sinner; and from the moment he bows to Jesus as his Saviour, he stands before God in all its dignity and blessedness. And, further, we must bear in mind, that the believer, however young in the faith, is not on the ground where law applies. His standing is neither that of Jew nor Gentile. "But ye are not in the flesh," says the apostle, "but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (Rom. viii. 9.) The law applies to man in the flesh, or in the first Adam. But the Christian is in the Second Adam. The law was made for the unrighteous, but the believer is made the righteousness of God in Christ. Therefore it cannot apply "to them which are in Christ Jesus." The apostle plainly says, "We are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 15.

When God made known His claims on man, through the law, it was then fully manifested that no one could meet them; and, consequently, all fell under the curse of a broken law. What then was to be done with man—a sinner—a law-breaker? Either he must be hopelessly condemned, or God must find a way, consistently with Himself, to shew mercy. This He has done, blessed be His name. Let the cross be witness. He gave His Son.

In due time Christ came. He met God's claims on man, bore the curse, blotted out sin, died in the sinner's stead, and opened up the way in righteousness for God's love and mercy to flow forth. This is the solid foundation of "the gospel of God"—the revelation of His boundless grace to the chief of sinners.

When man's utterly lost condition is thus seen, nothing good will be expected in the thoughts and feelings, any more than in the actions. The thought of what *I* ought to be for God will be given up; Christ will be all in all. "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." (Rom. vii. 18.) What a relief—what a deliverance—to be done with self—to know it, and to treat it, as a good-for-nothing thing! "I am crucified with Christ," says Paul, "nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Again, he says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Rom. vi. 6, 7, 8.) Surely these passages, and many others that might be quoted, should teach the anxious, restless soul, to be completely done with self in every form. Why look for anything good in that which God has set aside as utterly bad? Not even *one right feeling* towards God can ever spring from our first Adam nature. In God's sight, and according to the whole bearing of the Epistles, it is treated as a crucified, dead, buried, and forgotten thing. Strange that we should still own it as alive, and think it capable of producing some good thing for God! But so long as we do so, we increase our troubles, and get further away from rest and peace. The believer, as a child of the first Adam, came to his end on the cross. Christ is his new—eternal life; he is risen from the dead in Christ, and now before God in Him. "Ye in me, and I in you." This is grace; and, by and by, it will be wondrous glory.

And, now, in the view of such scriptures, what ought to be the thoughts, feelings, and language of every believer in Christ? So far as we can answer from the word of God, and from long experience, we should say—Rejoicing in the full liberty and blessing of the gospel before God. The soul is near to God as Christ is near, being in Him, and adorned with His comeliness. Can more be needed? Can more be desired? It is thus as far removed from sin and judgment as Christ Himself. “They are not of the world,” as He says, “even as I am not of the world.” Such truths have only to be received, in order to fill the heart with heavenly joy. “And these things,” says the apostle, “write we unto you, that your joy may be *full*.” (1 John i. 4.) Not merely, observe, that they might have joy, but that they might have *fulness of joy*. And why not? To know that Christ once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, is surely enough; we need nothing more to satisfy the heart.

For a sinner to be brought to God, is to be brought through death and resurrection, in union with Him who died and rose again. “Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” (1 Pet. iii. 18.) This is the great foundation truth of the soul’s perfect peace in the presence of God. All that belonged to the first Adam is destroyed and left behind, and the believer stands before God in all the blessedness of the risen, exalted, and glorified **Man**. He is now addressed in Scripture, as a Christian, a king, a priest, a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. His citizenship is in heaven, he belongs to the new creation—to God’s new world. There, “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” And to crown the blessedness of the new creation, it is added, “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. v.) These scriptures, I need not say, do not apply to the believer’s experience, as many, unhappily, have taught, and many

believed. The old nature in the most advanced Christian, is the same as it ever was, it has not "passed away." The passage refers to the *new creation*—to our association with Christ in resurrection; and of which He is the centre, life, and glory. And there, as we read, "*All things are of God.*" It is God's new world. On every thing in the old creation we find written, "passeth away." But everything in the new creation is stamped with God's own perfectness and unchangeableness. Happy thought! Blessed truth! All is perfect and unchangeable. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." Eccles. iii. 14.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)



PATRONAGE AND FELLOWSHIP.

THERE is a vast difference between being a patron of the cause of Christ, and having fellowship with Himself—between patronizing Christianity, and identification with a rejected Jesus. This difference is not generally seen; and yet there is a great deal involved in it.

There is something very attractive in the idea of being a patron of the good cause, of being able to contribute largely to the various christian institutions of the day, of using an extensive influence on behalf of the people of God and the servants of Christ—all this is immensely attractive to a liberal heart and a generous nature. And yet there may be all this without one atom of true fellowship with a rejected, outcast, crucified Lord.

This is a serious reflection. It is not that we want to detract, in the smallest degree, from the value of patronage in all its varied forms. By no means; our object, at present is merely to suggest to the reader that patronage and fellowship are not the same thing; and an example or two from Scripture will illustrate the difference.

Take the case of Moses in the court of Pharaoh. Look at the golden opportunity which he possessed of exerting his extensive influence *on behalf of* the people of God. Did he embrace it? Not at all. So far from availing himself of the wide field which providence had so manifestly thrown open to him, he actually abandoned it altogether, and flung himself into the very bosom of the despised and oppressed people of God. Instead of using his influence *for* them, he openly identified himself *with* them. If ever a man occupied a position in which he could act as an extensive patron of the cause of Christ, Moses was the man; but instead of exercising the patronage and so getting a name for himself, his heart sighed after fellowship which only led him into reproach, sorrow, and shame. He might have enjoyed the smiles of a monarch, the luxury of a palace, and the splendour of a court, and, all the while, have done large service to the cause of the Hebrews; but he gave all up, in order to identify himself with those people in the depth of their degradation and in all the toils of their wilderness course.

Such are the striking facts of the history; let us look, for a moment, at the inspired commentary thereon. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Heb. xi. 24—26.

From this passage we learn that what Moses did, he did by faith. We might feel disposed to condemn a man for giving up such a fine field of usefulness plainly opened up to him by a chain of most remarkable providences; but the Spirit of God declares that Moses did this by faith; and hence we have this most important truth that Jesus values fellowship with Himself far more highly than the

patronage of His cause. He thinks more of earnest, devoted identification with His Person, than of the most liberal outlay in connection with His work.

It is well to see this. God has called us into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ, and we should seek to know this. It is our high privilege to be identified with a rejected Lord and Master; and shall we refuse this, even though it be on the attractive plea of using our fortune and influence in patronizing Christianity in its varied institutions? If our Lord had said to the rich ruler, in the tenth of Mark, "*Go, use your riches for me; put forth your extensive influence for the furtherance of my cause in the earth,*" we may safely imagine the young man departing with alacrity and self-complacency. But when He told him to let all go—when He said, "*Sell all, and give to the poor, and come, take up the cross and follow me,*" he went away sad. No doubt he would have found it far easier and more agreeable to nature to patronize Christ's cause than to have fellowship with His Person. But, oh! christian reader, it is the latter that Jesus values. If I love Himself, I shall keep near Him, and His cause—His interests—His people—His work—and His workmen, will be dear to my heart. On the other hand, I may scatter thousands in the various fields of christian effort, in the schemes of benevolence and philanthropy, and, all the while, never taste the sacred reality of fellowship with Jesus Himself. His own words are, "*If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.*" May our hearts' desire be "*to know him, in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death.*" May God's Spirit enable us really to understand the difference between being patrons of Christianity and companions of a rejected Christ!



FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

How wonderful! how full of grace, the thought—the fact,
That I have fellowship with Thee!

And have I not, my God?

Does not the spring of everlasting life in Thee
Stream forth through Jesus;

Vivify and refresh each member of His body;

And again from them ascend in prayer and praise

To Thee their living Father?

Is there not a savour in the name of Jesus both to Thee and me?

To Thee He precious is, and altogether lovely;

And is He not the same to me?

O yes; when self-condemned—when pressed with care,

Or harassed by th' unwearied malice of our ever watchful foe;

Where should we seek relief—where rest our tempted souls,

But in the name of JESUS!

That tower so strong, wherein the righteous enter and are safe.

Yes; through grace, I love the name of JESUS:

His heart is *used* to sympathy;

He sees the struggles of the inner man, pressed with a burden
of the flesh;

He hears the intercession of the Spirit helping us in prayer;

And, touched with the feeling of our infirmities,

Forth from His yearning bosom plucks the ready hand—

Places beneath us the everlasting arms,

And, through the unction of the ever blessed Spirit,

Gives us, in th' exercise of faith, to realize

Near communion with Himself;

A wealthy place indeed,

So wide, so quiet, and so peaceable!

In Him, His life, and sin-atonement death,

We learn how God was glorified.

Glory is the making anything appear to be what that thing
really is,

For its own transcendent excellency:

Thus, Jesus glorified the Father!

What things were pleasing to Him, those He *always* did.

He was a holy and a pleasant child indeed,

Intent about His Father's business.

GOD'S WAY—AND HOW TO FIND IT.

(Read Job xxviii ; Luke xi. 34—36.)

“THERE is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen: the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.” What an unspeakable mercy for one who really desires to walk with God, to know that there is a way for him to walk in! God has prepared a pathway for His redeemed in which they may walk with all possible certainty, calmness, and fixedness. It is the privilege of every child of God, and every servant of Christ, to be as sure that he is in God’s way, as that his soul is saved. This may seem a strong statement; but the question is, is it true? If it be true, it cannot be too strong. No doubt, it may, in the judgment of some, savour a little of self-confidence and dogmatism, to assert, in such a day as that in which we live, and in the midst of such a scene as that through which we are passing, that we are sure of being in God’s path. But, what saith the Scripture? It declares, “There is a way,” and it also tells us how to find and how to walk in that way. Yes; the selfsame voice that tells us of God’s salvation for our souls, tells us also of God’s pathway for our feet. The very same authority that assures us that “He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life,” assures us also that there is a way so plain that, “The wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein.”

This, we repeat, is a signal mercy—a mercy at all times, but especially in a day of confusion and perplexity like the present. It is deeply affecting to notice the state of uncertainty in which many of God’s dear people are found at the present moment. We do not refer now to the question of salvation; of this we have spoken largely

elsewhere. But that which we have now before us is the path of the Christian—what he ought to do—where he should be found—how he ought to carry himself in the midst of the professing Church. Is it not too true that *multitudes of the Lord's people are at sea as to these things*? Are there not many who, were they to tell out the real feelings of their hearts, would have to own themselves in a thoroughly unsettled state—to confess that they know not what to do, or where to go, or what to believe? Now, the question is, would God leave His children—would Christ leave His servants, in such darkness and confusion?

“ No ; my dear Lord, in following thee,
And not in dark uncertainty,
This foot obedient moves.”

May not a child know the will of his father? May not a servant know the will of his master? And if this be so in our earthly relationships, how much more fully may we count upon it, in reference to our Father and Master in heaven. When Israel of old emerged from the Red Sea, and stood upon the margin of that great and terrible wilderness which lay between them and the land of promise, how were they to know their way? The trackless sand of the desert lay all around them. It was in vain to look for any footprint there. It was a dreary waste in which the vulture's eye could not discern a pathway. Moses felt this when he said to Hobab, “ Leave us not, I pray thee ; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.” (Numb. x. 31.) How well our poor unbelieving hearts can understand this touching appeal ! How one craves a human guide in the midst of a scene of perplexity ! How fondly the heart clings to one whom we deem competent to give us guidance in moments of darkness and difficulty !

And yet, we may ask, what did Moses want with Hobab's eyes? Had not Jehovah graciously undertaken to be their guide? Yes, truly, for we are told that, "On the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed; whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not, but when it was taken up they journeyed. At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses." Numb. ix. 15—23.

Here was divine guidance—a guidance, we may surely say, quite sufficient to render them independent of their own eyes, of Hobab's eyes, and the eyes of any other

mortal. It is interesting to note that in the opening of the book of Numbers, it was arranged that the ark of the covenant was to find its place in the very bosom of the congregation. But, in chapter x., we are told that when "they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey, the ark of the covenant of the Lord *went before them*, in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them." Instead of Jehovah finding a resting place in the bosom of His redeemed people, He becomes their travelling guide, and goes before them to seek out a resting place for them. What touching grace is here! And yet, what faithfulness! If Moses will ask Hobab to be their guide, and that, too, in the very face of God's provision, even the cloud and the silver trumpet, then will Jehovah leave His place in the centre of the tribes, and go before them to search them out a resting place. And did not He know the wilderness well? Would not He be better for them than ten thousand Hobabs? Might they not fully trust Him? Assuredly. He would not lead them astray. If His grace had redeemed them from Egypt's bondage, and conducted them through the Red Sea, surely they might confide in the same grace to guide them across that great and terrible wilderness, and bring them safely into the land flowing with milk and honey.

But, it must be borne in mind, that, in order to profit by divine guidance, there must be the abandonment of our own will, and of all confidence in our own reasonings, as well as all confidence in the thoughts and reasonings of others. If I have Jehovah as my guide, I do not want my own eyes or the eyes of a Hobab either. God is sufficient. I can trust Him. He knows all the way across the desert; and, hence, if I keep my eye upon Him, I shall be guided aright.

But this leads us on to the second division of our subject, namely, "How am I to find God's way." An all-

important question, surely. Whither am I to turn to find God's pathway? If the vulture's eye—so keen, so powerful, so far-seeing, hath not seen it—if the young lion, so vigorous in movement, so majestic in mien, hath not trodden it—if man knoweth not the price of it, and if it is not to be found in the land of the living—if the depth saith, It is not in me, and the sea saith, It is not with me—if it cannot be gotten for gold, or precious stones—if the wealth of the universe cannot equal it, and no wit of man discover it,—then whither am I to turn? Where shall I find it? Shall I turn to those great standards of orthodoxy which rule the religious thought and feeling of millions, throughout the length and breadth of the professing Church? Is this wondrous pathway of wisdom to be found with them? Do they form any exception to the great, broad, sweeping rule of Job xxviii.? Assuredly not. What then am I to do? I know there is a way. God, who cannot lie, declares this, and I believe it; but where am I to find it? “Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.” Does it not seem like a hopeless case for any poor ignorant mortal to search for this wondrous pathway? No, blessed be God, it is by no means a hopeless case, for “He understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; to make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder; then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it; yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, *the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding.*”

Here, then, is the divine secret of wisdom. “The fear

of the Lord." This sets the conscience directly in the presence of God, which is its only true place. The object of Satan is to keep the conscience out of this place—to bring it under the power and authority of man—to lead it into subjection to the commandments and doctrines of men—to thrust in something between the conscience and the authority of Christ the Lord—it matters not what it is; it may be a creed or a confession containing a quantity of truth—it may be the opinion of a man or a set of men—the judgment of some favourite teacher—anything, in short, to come in and usurp, in the heart, the place which belongs to God's word alone. This is a terrible snare, and a stumbling-block—a most serious hindrance to our progress in the ways of the Lord. God's word must rule me—God's pure and simple word, not man's interpretation thereof. No doubt, God may use a man to unfold that word to my soul; but then it is not man's unfolding of God's word that rules me, but God's word by man unfolded. This is of all importance. We must be exclusively taught and exclusively governed by the word of the living God. Nothing else will keep us straight, or give solidity and consistency to our character and course as Christians. There is a strong tendency within and around us to be ruled by the thoughts and opinions of men—by those great standards of doctrine which men have set up. Those standards and opinions may have a large amount of truth in them—they may be all true so far as they go; that is not the point in question now. What we want to impress upon the christian reader is, that he is not to be governed by the thoughts of his fellow man, but simply and solely by the word of God. It is of no value to hold a truth from man; I must hold it directly from God Himself. God may use a man to communicate His truth; but unless I hold it as from God, it has no divine power over my heart and conscience; it does not bring me into living contact with God, but actually hinders

that contact by bringing in something between my soul and His holy authority.

We should greatly like to enlarge upon and enforce this great principle; but we must forbear, just now, in order to unfold to the reader *one or two solemn and practical* points set forth in the eleventh chapter of Luke—points which, if entered into, will enable us to understand a little better, how to find God's way. We shall quote the passage at length. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light."

Here, then, we are furnished with the true secret of discerning God's way. It may seem very difficult, in the midst of the troubled sea of Christendom, to steer one's course aright. So many conflicting voices fall on the ear. So many opposing views solicit our attention, men of God differ so in judgment, shades of opinion are so multiplied, that it seems impossible to reach a sound conclusion. We go to one man who, so far as we can judge, seems to have a single eye, and he tells us one thing; we go to another man who also seems to have a single eye, and he tells the very reverse. What then are we to think? Well, one thing is certain, that our own eye is not single when we are running, in uncertainty and perplexity, from one man to another. The single eye is fixed on Christ alone, and thus the body is filled with light. The Israelite of old had not to run hither or thither to consult with his fellow as to the right way. Each had the same divine guide, namely, the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. In a word, Jehovah Himself, was the infallible Guide of each member of the congregation. They were not left

to the guidance of the most intelligent, sagacious, or experienced man in the assembly; neither were they left to follow their own way; each was to follow the Lord. The silver trumpet announced to all alike, the mind of God; and no one whose ear was open and attentive was left at any loss. The eye and the ear of each were to be directed to God *alone*, and not to a fellow mortal. This was the secret of guidance in the trackless desert of old, and this is the secret of guidance in the vast moral wilderness through which God's redeemed are passing now. One man may say, "Listen to me;" and another may say, "Listen to me;" and a third may say, "Let each one take his own way." The obedient heart says, in opposition to all, "I must follow my Lord."

This makes all so simple. It will not, by any means, tend to foster a spirit of haughty independence; quite the reverse. The more I am taught to lean on God alone for guidance, the more I shall distrust and look off from myself, and this, assuredly, is not independence. True, it will deliver me from servile following of any man, by giving me to feel my responsibility to Christ alone; but this is precisely what is so much needed, at the present moment. The more closely we examine the elements that are abroad in the professing Church, the more we shall be convinced of our personal need of this entire subjection to divine authority which is only another name for "the fear of the Lord," or, "a single eye." There is one brief sentence, in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, which furnishes a perfect antidote to the self-will and the servile fear of man so rife around us, and that is, "We must obey God." What an utterance! "We must *obey*." This is the cure for self-will. "We must obey *God*." This is the cure for servile subjection to the commandments and doctrines of men. There must be obedience; but obedience to what? To God's authority, and to that alone. Thus the soul is preserved from the influence of infidelity on the one hand,

and superstition on the other. Infidelity says, "Do as you like." Superstition says, "Do as man tells you." Faith says, "We must obey God."

Here is the holy balance of the soul in the midst of the conflicting and confounding influences around us, in this our day. As a servant, I am to obey my Lord; as a child, I am to hearken to my Father's commandments. Nor am I the less to do this, although my fellow-servants and my brethren may not understand me. I must remember that the immediate business of my soul is with God Himself. "He before whom the elders bow, with Him is *all* my business now." It is my privilege to be as sure that I have my Master's mind as to my path as that I have His word for the security of my soul. If not, where am I? Is it not my privilege to have a single eye? Yes; surely. And what then? "A body full of light." Now, if my body is full of light, can my mind be full of perplexity? Impossible. The two things are wholly incompatible, and hence, when any one is plunged "in dark uncertainty," it is very plain his eye is not single. He may seem very sincere, he may be very anxious to be guided aright; but he may rest assured there is the lack of a single eye—that indispensable prerequisite to divine guidance. The word is plain, "If thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light." God will ever guide the obedient, humble soul; but, on the other hand, if we do not walk according to the light communicated, we shall get into darkness. Light not acted upon becomes darkness, and, oh! "how great is that darkness!" Nothing is more dangerous than tampering with the light which God gives. It must, sooner or later, lead to the most disastrous consequences. "Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness." "Hear, ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before *he* cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for

light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Jeremiah xiii. 15, 16.

This is deeply solemn. What a contrast between a man having a single eye, and a man not acting on the light which God has given him! The one has his body full of light; the other has his body full of darkness; the one has no part dark; the other is plunged in gross darkness; the one is a light bearer for others; the other is a stumbling-block in the way. We know nothing more solemn than the judicial acting of God, in actually turning our light into darkness, because we have refused to act on the light which He has been pleased to impart.

Christian reader, art thou acting up to thy light? Has God sent a ray of light into thy soul? Has He shown thee something wrong in thy ways or associations? Art thou persisting in any line of action which conscience tells thee is not in full accordance with thy Master's will? Search and see. "Give glory to the Lord thy God." Act on the light. Do not hesitate. Think not of consequences. Obey, we beseech thee, the word of thy Lord. This very moment, as thine eye scans these lines, let the purpose of thy soul be to depart from iniquity wherever thou findest it. Say not, Whither shall I go? What shall I do next? There is evil everywhere. It is only escaping from one evil to plunge into another. Say not these things; do not argue or reason; do not look at results; think not of what the world or the world-church will say of thee; rise above all these things, and tread the path of light—that path which shineth more and more unto the perfect day of glory. Remember, God never gives light for two steps at a time. If He has given thee light for one step, then, in the fear and love of His Name take that one step, and thou wilt assuredly get more light—yes, "more and more." But if there be the refusal to act, the light which is in thee will become gross darkness, thy feet will stumble on the dark mountains of error which lie on either

side of the straight and narrow path of obedience; and thou wilt become a stumbling-block in the path of others. Some of the most grievous stumbling-blocks that lie, at this moment, in the pathway of anxious enquirers are found in the persons of those who once seemed to possess the truth, but have turned from it. The light which was in them has become darkness, and, oh! how great and how appalling is that darkness! How sad it is to see those who ought to be light-bearers, acting as a positive hindrance to young and earnest Christians! But let not young Christians be hindered by them. The way is plain. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Let each one hear and obey for himself, the voice of his Lord. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." The Lord be praised for this precious word! It puts each one in the place of direct responsibility to Christ Himself; it tells us plainly what is *God's way*, and, just as plainly, *how to find it*.

NOTE.—It is, at once, interesting and solemn to note the contrast between the end of the professing church in 2 Thessalonians ii. and the future of the true church—the bride of the Lamb, in Revelation xxii. Of the former, we read, "For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Of the latter, we read, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it." What a contrast! In the one case, light and truth rejected, issuing in darkness, delusion, and damnation; in the other case, the glory of God and the Lamb filling the city with light, and that light shining through the jasper walls, enlightening the saved nations below!



HUMILITY.

1. There is a difference between being humble before God, and being humbled before God. I am humbled before God, because I have not been humble. I am humbled, because of my sin. If I had been humble, I should have had grace given me to prevent it. For "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

2. The only humble place is the presence of God. It is when I get out of His presence that I am in danger of being lifted up. People say it is dangerous to be too often on the mount. Now I do not think that it is when we are on the mount that we are in danger, but when we come off it. It is when we come off the mount that we begin to think that we have been there. Then pride comes in. I do not think that Paul needed a thorn when he was in the third heavens. It was after he had come down that he was in danger of being exalted above measure—from thinking that he had been where no one else had been.

3. I do not believe that to think badly of ourselves is true humility. True humility is never to think of ourselves at all—and that is so hard to come to. It is constantly, I, I, I. If you only begin a sentence with I, there is nothing that a person will not put after it.

4. What hearts have we! "I the Lord search the heart." Who but God can know them? Persons who think they search their hearts and are quick in their evil, do not really know their hearts, nor are they truly humble. The fact is, they *must* be talking of *themselves*, and their pride is nourished even by talking of how evil they are.

THE GOSPEL, AND ITS RESULTS.

(Continued from page 137.)

We will now look at

THE GOSPEL OF GOD, AS PROMISED BY THE PROPHETS.

But first, it may be profitable to notice the difference between the expressions, "the *Gospel of God*," and "the *Church of God*." The distinction, though important, is too frequently lost sight of. While they are closely connected, they are yet perfectly distinct. The Church of God, as we learn from the New Testament, was not the subject of revelation or promise in the Old; whereas, the Gospel has been the subject of revelation from the beginning, though the fulness of God's grace was not proclaimed, until after the work of Christ was accomplished. The Church as a matter of fact, had its commencement on the day of Pentecost: the truth concerning it, was given to the Apostle Paul; the other apostles scarcely allude to it. It is frequently spoken of by the apostle as "the mystery." (Eph. iii.) But the word, "mystery," in the New Testament, does not mean something that is difficult to understand, or that cannot be understood, but something that was not revealed—kept secret. "Which in other ages," as the apostle says, "was not made known unto the sons of men." But the gospel never was a *mystery*—a hidden secret. It was revealed, we may say, in the garden of Eden, the grace of God and the ruin of man being the foundation of it. The woman's seed was to bruise the serpent's head.

" Soon as the reign of sin began,
The light of mercy dawned on man,
When God announced the early news :
The woman's seed thy head shall bruise."

But when we come down to the prophets, we find the

great truth of the gospel, the subject of promise, in a variety of forms, and announced as not very distant. It had not come in their day—the glorious truth was not revealed, but it was spoken of as near at hand. “I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.” (Isaiah xlii. 13.) Again, “Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.” (Isaiah lvi. 1.) And, again, in the prophet Daniel we have a very full statement of the work of Christ, and of its blessed results. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” xi. 24.

Thus we see, that in Old Testament times, the gospel, in its fulness was *promised*; but not what is called in the New Testament *preached*. The apostle was “separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.” (Rom. i. 1, 2.) In this we have the great difference between Old and New Testament times as to the gospel. Then, it was promised as God’s great blessing to come; now, it is preached as come in all its fulness and freeness to the whole world. At the same time we are fully assured that God has never left Himself without a witness—a testimony to His mercy, and that all who then believed God according to the revelation which He gave of Himself were saved. “Who-soever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” is a quotation from the prophet Joel. And no statement of the gospel could be more free than this; but the *greatness* of the salvation was not made known until Christ came. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John i. 17.

A deeply interesting view of the gospel now opens up to us. The righteousness of God promised of old, is introduced, and the full salvation of God is preached. A new order of things has commenced. "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." The believer is now assured, on the authority of the word of God, that he has eternal life, and divine righteousness. Old Testament saints, no doubt, had eternal life, but it does not appear that they knew it. How sad to think that many New Testament saints, as to their experience, are just where the saints were in olden times. The grace that now shines under the title, "The Gospel of God," meets the believer with heaven's richest blessings. *Not one is lacking.* And here, too, we have comfort in seeing that it always was in the purpose of God thus to bless. Eternal life was promised in Christ Jesus, before the world began; and the righteousness of God was witnessed both by law and prophets. Grace always dwelt in the heart of God, as in its native fountain. "God is love," and grace is the joyous giving forth of that love in blessing. Its streams may be many, and its application a thousand fold, but the fountain is one.

As the time drew nigh when the way would be completely opened up by the death and resurrection of Christ, for the full outflow of blessing to man, we find grace anticipating the day in such words as these, "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry." And now that Christ has come, and finished the work given Him to do, God's righteousness is revealed, and His salvation fully come. Every blessing is folded up in "the Gospel of God." By the cross every barrier was broken down, and all hindrances were removed. Heaven's highest claims were fully met, sin was put away, death abolished, and the vail of the temple rent from top to bottom. The cross is also the declaration of the righteousness of God, in forgiving the sins of believers before

Christ came. It becomes the grand centre of all the ways of God. Rom. iii. 19—26.

Under the law it was a question of righteousness on man's part; under the gospel, divine righteousness is revealed on God's part; it is "unto all, and upon all them that believe." Under the law man was acting—doing. "Do this and live." Then God was behind the veil, giving out His laws, and dwelling in the thick darkness. "And the people stood afar off: and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." (Ex. xx. 21.) But under the gospel, God is acting—doing; and man has simply to believe. But having received eternal life, and divine righteousness through faith, he is not only delivered from dead works, but he is to serve the living God. Then his doing—his acting commences.

Thus, we may say, the death of Christ has changed everything. The character of man's relation to God is entirely changed. Even heaven itself is changed since Jesus died. Now, Christ is there as the *risen man*, and as the Great High Priest of His people; and there, too, His people are privileged to worship with Him. Outer-court worship is now done away; all Christians are priests, and their only place of worship is the holiest of all.

It is often most perplexing to awakened souls, when assured that the question of sin, in the case of those who return to God, trusting in Christ, is never raised. What has been already said, shews the foundation of this marvellous grace. The question of sin having been settled between God and Christ on the cross, it could not again be raised between God and the sinner when he believes in Jesus.

But let us take an example. Supposing the very worst of sinners becomes convinced of his sins, and draws near to God under a sense of their greatness and number; it may be with fear and trembling, and little wonder. Still, he comes in faith, believing that Christ died for sinners,

and that His blood is all sufficient to wash his sins away. He might not be able to state these things just as they are now written, but, substantially, they are in his mind. Well, and how is he met—how is he received? So far as we understand God's ways in grace with the sinner, we should say, that he is met, received, owned, honoured, and blessed, according to that which is due to Christ as the Saviour of sinners. Nay, more, he is received as Christ Himself—“accepted in the beloved.” The word *sin* is never mentioned. Were God to raise this question with the sinner, he could not answer Him for one of a thousand, he would be utterly condemned. But, blessed be the God of all grace, the Father of our Lord, the prodigal is welcomed with open arms, and embraced with the kiss of perfect peace. Evidently, the work of Christ is the ground, and the riches of divine grace the standard of his blessings. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Eph. i. 7.) Were he to receive what is due to himself, it would be immediate, unmitigated judgment. God would be just in condemning the sinner, but on the ground of the work of Christ, “He is just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Rom. iii. 19—26.

Now, under grace, *man believes and God acts*. This is what we understand by the expression, “The gospel of God;” and the similar one, “The righteousness of God.” It is the revelation of God Himself, in His gracious actings towards man, according to the greatness of His own goodness and the claims of Christ—the risen Man in glory.

The blessed Lord having so glorified God, and blotted out sin on the cross, that to meet the returning sinner with that which is due to Christ Himself, is the true aspect of “the gospel of God;” and the gospel, we firmly believe, is never understood until it be known as “the gospel of God.” But, oh! what a gospel it is! What tidings to guilty man! What grace! What wondrous grace!

It is this testimony to the grace of God, which makes the results of hearing it so awfully and solemnly important. What must be the guilt of those who neglect or despise such a gospel! And, what? oh! what, must be the bitter anguish of a soul, when it finds the fearful results of its self-chosen ways, in the depths of unutterable woe. All hope gone—the day of mercy past—the door of mercy closed, and no ear of pity to listen to thy doleful cry! But memory! oh! how vivid! Every day—every hour of the past—sternly mirrored before thy mind! All delusion, unbelief, and indifference, gone! These things, so common on earth, have no place in hell. The past, the present, and the future, have put on their deep, unutterable realities! All sleep, and rest, and repose have for ever fled away, and anguish, remorse, and despair, now prey upon the undying soul. Tears of blood would not be too much to shed over a soul laid in such ruins; and especially the soul of a gospel hearer.

Oh! sinner, sinner,—hear, believe! Thy days are few—thy last opportunity will soon come—delay not! Turn now, even now, to thy God and Saviour! Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. In this the day of God's wondrous grace, thy sins, however many, are all forgiven the moment thou hast faith in Jesus. Many prodigals, when feeling the bitterness of sin, after the pleasure is gone, would gladly return to their fathers' house on earth, but they are afraid of what would be said to them, and of the shame that would hang over them, and they cannot return. The assurance of a happy welcome, and the past forgotten, would make them fly as on eagles' wings. But, oh! the thought of that disdainful look—that outside place, where the first was once enjoyed, wrings the heart, and seals its alienation. I would rather, it exclaims, die in my wretchedness, than submit to such humiliation! But now, my fellow sinner, listen—do listen to the pleadings of one who knows the bitterness of sin, and the sweetness of

pardoning mercy. Things are not so with thy heavenly Father, nor with thy Father's house on high. Not only wouldst thou be welcomed, but thy Father in heaven would run to meet thee, and not one word would be said as to the past. The past, with every believer, is not only forgiven but forgotten. What a mercy! What a comfort to know it! The joy that fills the Father's heart on the return of the prodigal, fills all other hearts around Him. No disdainful looks would ever meet thee there—no outside place would ever be thine. Near and loved as Christ Himself—shining in His glory and beauty, and welcomed as a son of the Father, with all the dignities and honours which that love can bestow. But time would fail, and paper and ink would be exhausted, before we could write the glories of a child of God—of a sinner saved by sovereign grace.

And yet, most strange to tell, we find many now, like Esau of old, who sold his title to the land of Canaan for a mess of pottage. He preferred a present—a momentary gratification to a future inheritance. And this is what thousands and tens of thousands are doing still. A present gratification has more power over their hearts, than the surest title to a heavenly inheritance. My reader—is this thy condition? If so, is it wise? Hast thou no concern for thy precious soul? Only think—an immortal soul, happy or miserable for ever: and that thine own soul. How long will it be before it is either in heaven or in hell? Is this a matter of little or no moment to thee? It is thy soul—thine own soul, my dear reader—ruin it not, I beseech thee. It is capable of enjoying God and glory, degrade it not to the depths of hell—sink it not in the bottomless pit. It is thy soul—thine own soul; and ought to be thy darling—thy dearest object on earth. Would not the thought be dreadful—the lamentation bitter? “I have brought all this ruin and misery on myself—my own hand has done it—but, oh! is it for ever? Is there no

hope?" No hope—falls heavily and surely on the sinking, despairing heart; and thou wilt be far away from those who once deeply felt for thee—earnestly prayed for thee—affectionately warned thee, and were ever ready to weep with thee or for thee. No sympathizing heart can ever be found there. And then there will be time to think, and memory will do her awful work; but self-reproach will be unavailing—how many have now to say, in bitterest anguish, "Oh! the opportunities I refused—the warnings I despised—the light I quenched—the convictions I stifled!"

But why should I dwell on such awful scenes? Not, certainly, because I love the theme, but because I love those that are in danger of heedlessly falling into them. Hast thou, my fellow-sinner, turned in heart to the Lord? If so, I close the subject, and joyously turn with thee to Him, and write the boundless blessedness—the ineffable happiness, and the eternal glories of thy new—thy divine position in Christ Jesus, our ever blessed Lord. Happy soul! Hallelujah!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

"Oh! dearest Saviour, take my heart!

Where can such sweetness be,
As I have tasted in thy love,
As I have found in thee?

Let every fervour of my soul,
By thy sweet sacrifice,
For ever be at thy control,
And but to serve thee rise.

'Tis heaven on earth to know thy love,
To feel thy quickening grace:
And all the heaven I hope above
Is but to see thy face.

Then keep me in thy love, O Lord,
And teach me of thy ways,
Till thou shalt come to take me home,
And see thee face to face."

DEVOTEDNESS: WHAT IS IT?

(Read Gen. xxii. 1—12.)

It has often been said, "There are two sides to every question." This saying is true and very important. It demands special attention in approaching the subject which stands at the head of this paper. The history of the professing church affords many proofs of the fact that serious mischief has been done by devoted men who were not guided by sound principle. Indeed it will ever be found that, in proportion to the ardour of the devotedness, will be the gravity of the mischief, where the judgment is not wisely directed. We must confess we long for more true devotedness in ourselves and others. It does seem to us the special want in this our day. There is abundance of profession, and that, too, of a very high character. Knowledge is greatly increased amongst us, and we are thankful for knowledge; but knowledge is not energy—profession is not devotedness. It is not that we desire to set the one against the other; we want to combine the two. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Mark this lovely union—this exquisite entwining of a threefold cord—"Power, love, and a sound mind." Were it "power" alone, it might lead one to carry himself with a high hand—to push aside or crush any who could not come up to one's own mark—to cherish and manifest a spirit of haughty independence—to be intolerant of any contrariety of thought or feeling. On the other hand, were it a spirit of "love" only, it might induce an easy-going temper—a total indifference as to the claims of truth and holiness—a readiness to tolerate error for the sake of peace. But there is both *love* and *power*, the one to balance the other; and, moreover, there is the "*sound mind*" to adjust the two, and give to each its proper range and its just application. Such is the adjusting power of holy scripture

for which we cannot be too thankful. We are so apt to be one-sided—to run into wild extremes—to run one principle to seed, while another, though equally important, is not even allowed to take root. One will be all for what he calls power; another, for what he calls love. Again, one will extol energy; another will only speak of the value of principle. We want both, and our God does most graciously supply both. A man who is all for principle may do nothing, through fear of doing wrong. A man who is all for power may do mischief through fear of doing nothing. But the man who is enabled, by grace, to combine the two, will do the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way. This is what we want, and to meet, in some feeble way, this want is one special object of the following paper, to which may God most graciously attach the seal of His blessing.

Now, in handling our theme, it may help us, in the way of clearness and precision, to consider, first, the *ground*; secondly, the *spirit*; and, thirdly, the *object* of true devotedness. What, then, is

THE GROUND OF TRUE DEVOTEDNESS?

If we answer this question from the ample materials furnished by the history of Abraham, we must, without any hesitation, say, it is, simple faith in the living God. This is, this must be the solid ground of true, earnest, steady devotedness. If there be not the link of personal faith in God, we shall be driven hither and thither by every breath of human opinion, and tossed about by every ripple of the tide of circumstances. If we are not conscious of this living link between our souls and God, we shall never be able to stand at all, much less to make any headway in the path of real devotedness. "Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must *believe that he is*, and that he is a rewarder of *them that diligently seek him.*" Heb. xi. 6.

Here lies the secret. We must believe that He is, and what He is. We must have to do with God, in the secret of our own souls, apart from, and independent of all beside. Our individual connection with God must be a grand reality, a living fact, a real and unmistakeable experience, lying at the very root of our existence, and forming the stay and prop of our souls, at all times, and under all circumstances. Mere opinions will not do; dogmas and creeds will not avail. It will not suffice to say with the lips, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty." Neither this nor any other form of mere words will do. It must be a heart question—a matter between the soul and God Himself. Nothing short of this can sustain the soul, at any time, but more particularly in a day like the present, in the which we find ourselves surrounded by so much that is hollow and superficial. Few things perhaps tend more to sap the foundations of the soul's confidence than a large amount of unreal profession. One may gather this, in some measure, from the fact that the finger of the infidel is continually pointed at the gross inconsistencies, exhibited in the lives of the teachers and professors of religion. And although it be true, that such inconsistencies, even were they multiplied ten thousand fold, will never shelter the infidel from the just consequences of his unbelief, inasmuch as each one must give account of himself, and for himself, before the judgment seat of Christ; yet it is a fact that unreal profession tends to shake confidence, and hence the urgent need of simple, earnest, personal faith in God—of unquestioning childlike confidence in His word—of constant artless dependence upon His wisdom, goodness, power, and faithfulness.

This is the anchor of the soul without which it will be impossible to ride securely in the midst of Christendom's troubled waters. If we are, in any way, propped up by our fellow, if we are leaning upon an arm of flesh, if we are deriving support from the countenance of a mortal, if

our faith stands in the wisdom of man, or the best of men, if our fear toward God is taught by the precept of men, we may rest assured that all this will be tested and fully manifested. Nothing will stand but that faith that endures as seeing Him who is invisible—that looks not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at the things that are unseen and eternal.

How vividly all this was illustrated in the life of the father of the faithful, we may easily learn from the marvellous history of his life given by the pen of inspiration. "Abraham believed God." Observe: it was not something about God that he believed—some doctrine or opinion respecting God, received by tradition from man. No; this would never have availed for Abraham. It was with God Himself he had to do, in the profoundest depths of his own individual being. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee." Acts vii. 2, 3.

These opening sentences of Stephen's powerful address to the Council, set forth the true secret of Abraham's entire career, from Ur of the Chaldees to Mount Moriah. It is not our purpose, here, to dwell upon the solemn and instructive interval at Charran; our desire is rather to set before the reader, as plainly and pointedly as we can, the unspeakable value, yea, the absolute necessity of faith in God, not only for life and salvation, but for anything like true devotedness of heart to Christ and His cause. True, that honoured servant of God tarried at Charran, travelled down into Egypt, turned to Hagar, trembled at Gerar and denied his wife. All this appears upon the surface of his history, for he was but a man—even a man of like passions with ourselves. But "He believed God." Yes, from first to last, this remarkable man exercised, in the main, an unshaken confidence in the living God. He believed in

that great truth that lies at the bottom of all truth, namely, that God is; and he believed also that God is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him. It was this that drew Abraham forth from Ur of the Chaldees—from the midst of all those ties and associations in the which he had lived and moved, and had his being. It was this that sustained him through all the vicissitudes of his pilgrimage; and, finally, it was this that enabled him to stand on Mount Moriah, and there show himself ready to lay upon the altar that one who was not only the son of his bosom, but also the channel through which all the families of the earth were yet to be blessed. Nothing but faith could have enabled Abraham to turn his back upon the land of his birth, to go forth not knowing whither he went. To the men of his day he must have seemed to be a fool or a madman. But oh! he knew *whom* he believed. Here lay the source of his strength. He was not following cunningly devised fables. He, most assuredly, was not propped up by the circumstances or the influences which surrounded him. He was not supported by the countenance of man. Flesh and blood afforded him no aid in his wonderful career. God was his shield, his portion, and his reward, and in leaning on Him, he found the true secret of all his victory over the world, and of that calm and holy elevation which characterised him from first to last.

Reader, have you faith in God? Do you know Him? Is there a link between your soul and Him? Can you trust Him for everything? Are you, at this moment, consciously leaning upon Him—upon His word—upon His arm? Remember, if there is any darkness or hesitation as to this, devotedness is, and must be, out of the question. All steady devotedness rests upon the solid ground of personal faith in the living God. We cannot too strongly insist upon this, in a day of profession as wide-spread as it is shallow. It will not do to “say” we believe. There is far too much of this—far too much

head knowledge and lip profession—far too much of mere surface work. It is easy to say we believe; but as James puts it, “What doth it profit though a man *say* he have faith?” Faith is a divine reality, and not a mere human effort. It is based upon divine revelation and not upon the working of human reason. It connects the soul with God, with a living, mighty link, which nothing can ever snap. It bears the soul above and carries it on in triumph, come what may. There may be failure and confusion, error and evil, coldness and deadness, strife and division, breaking down and turning aside, stumblings and inconsistencies—all manner of things to shake the confidence and stagger the soul; but faith holds on its peaceful, steady way, undaunted and undismayed; it leans on God alone and finds all its springs in Him. Nothing can touch the faithfulness of God, and nothing can shake the confidence of the heart that simply takes God at His word.

And, be it remembered, that faith is, in reality, taking God at His word. It is believing what God says, because He says it. It is taking God’s thoughts in place of our own. “He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true.” How simple! God has revealed Himself, faith walks in the light of that revelation. God has spoken; faith believes the word. But, if it be asked, “How has God revealed Himself? and where is His voice to be heard?” He has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ; and His voice may be heard in His word. He has not, blessed be His name, left us in the darkness of night, nor even in the dimness of twilight; He has poured upon us the full flood-tide of His own eternal truth, in order that we may possess all the certainty, all the clearness, all the authority, which a divine revelation can give.

Is it enquired, “How can we know that God has spoken?” We reply, “How can we know the sun is shining?” Surely by the genial influence of his beams. How can we know that the dew has fallen? Surely by its re-

freshing influence upon the earth, if not by the lustre of its pearly drops. So of the precious word of God. It speaks for itself. Do I want a philosopher to tell me the sun is shining, or the dewdrops falling? Assuredly not. I feel their influence. I own their power. No doubt a philosopher might explain to me the properties of light, and a chemist might instruct me as to the component parts of the dew. They might do all this for me, even though I had been born and reared in a coal-mine, and had never seen either the one or the other. But they could not make me *feel* their influence. So it is, in a divine way, as to the word of God. It makes itself felt — felt in the heart, felt in the conscience, felt in the deep chambers of the soul. True, it is by the power of the Holy Ghost; but, all the while, there is power in the word.

Let us remember this. Let no one imagine that God cannot speak to the heart, or that the heart cannot understand what He says, and feel the power of His word. Cannot a father speak to his child, and cannot the child understand his father? Yes, verily; and our heavenly Father can speak to us—to our very hearts, and we can hear His voice, and know His mind, and lean upon His eternal word. And this is faith—simple, living, saving faith. Such a definition of faith might not satisfy a profound theologian; but that makes no difference. The heart does not need learned theological definitions. It wants God, and it has Him in His word. God has spoken. He has revealed Himself. He has come forth from the thick darkness, chased away the shades of twilight, and shone upon us in the face of Jesus Christ, and on the eternal page of holy scripture.

Reader, hast thou found Him? Dost thou really know Him by the revelation which He has given, and by the word which He has spoken? Is His word a reality to thee? Is it thy stay and support? Is it the real ground on which thou art resting for time and eternity? Do, we

beseech thee, make sure work of it, at this moment. See to it that thou hast a lively faith in God, and such a sense of the value, the importance, and the authority of His word, as that thou wouldest rather part with all beside than surrender it. It is, unquestionably, the only ground of devotedness. It is utterly impossible that a heart distracted and tossed about with unbelieving reasonings, can ever be truly devoted to Christ or His service. "He that cometh to God, *must* believe that he is." How simple! How plain! How could Abraham have left his country—how could he have run the race—how could he have given up everything and come forth as a stranger and a pilgrim, not having so much ground as to set his foot upon—how could he have stood upon Mount Moriah and stretched forth his hand for the knife to slay his son? How could he have done all or any of these things, if he had not had simple faith in the one living and true God? Impossible.

And so, in thy case, beloved reader, unless thou canst trust God—unless thou art sustained by the real power of naked faith in the word of the living God, thou wilt never be able to get on—nay, thou hast no life in thee. Truly we may say, "*No faith no life.*" There may be high profession—there may be the semblance of devotedness; but if there be not a lively faith, there can be no spiritual life; and, if there be no life, there cannot be any true devotedness. "The just shall live by faith." They not only get life by faith, but live, day by day, and hour by hour, by faith. It is the spring of life and power to the soul, all the journey through. It connects the soul with God, and, by so doing, imparts steadiness, consistency, energy, and holy decision to the servant of Christ. If there be not the constant exercise of faith in God, there will be fluctuation and uncertainty. Work will be taken up, by fits and starts, instead of being the necessary result of calm abiding in Christ, by faith. There will be an occasional rush at some line of service which is merely taken up, for the time, and

then coldly abandoned. The course, instead of being a steady, upward and onward one, will be zigzag and most unsatisfactory. At times, there will be a feverish excitement, and then again, deadness and indifference.

All this is the very reverse of true devotedness. It does serious damage to the cause of Christ. Better far never to start on the course at all, than, having started, to turn aside and give it up. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." True devotedness is based upon a profound and earnest faith in God. It has its root deep down in the heart. It is not fitful or whimsical, but calm, consistent, decided, and steadily progressive. It may, at times, perhaps, when tried by the rule of a romantic and visionary enthusiasm, seem slow-paced; but, if it is slow, it is only because it *will* be sure; and the end will prove the difference between the energy of nature, and the actings of faith.

May God, by His Spirit, lead all His people into a truer and deeper sense of what devotedness really is. There is an energy abroad. The minds of men are active. Principles as well as passions are in action. Contending elements are at work underneath the surface of human life. Society is becoming, more and more, an unsettled thing. Men seem to be on the look out, as we say, for something. There is evidently a crisis at hand. Men are taking sides. The stage is being cleared for some grand act of the drama. What is needed, in view of all this? Unquestionably, a calm, deep, earnest faith in the word of God. This, we feel persuaded, is the only thing to keep the heart steady, come what may. Nothing will keep the soul in peace—nothing can give fixedness to the course—nothing can maintain us in the path of devotedness but the realization of that living link between the soul and God Himself, which, as being divine and eternal, must, of necessity, outlive all that is merely human and temporal.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

THE GOSPEL, AND ITS RESULTS.

(Continued from page 160.)

We will now briefly consider

THE GOSPEL OF GOD, AS PREACHED BY THE APOSTLES.

It is most interesting to observe how exactly the Apostle Paul takes up the gospel as it was promised by the prophets. The passages already quoted from the latter, are sufficient for our present purpose; such as, "My righteousness is near. My salvation is near to come; and my righteousness to be revealed." Nothing can be clearer, than that these, and all such passages, do not refer to the covenant of Sinai. They are full of the spirit of grace—the grace that announces the righteousness of God in the salvation of the sinner through faith. Both the righteousness and the salvation are directly from God Himself. But we have not now to suppose what may be their true meaning. The apostle tells us that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Here we have salvation and righteousness revealed, as spoken of in the Jewish scriptures. The same line of truth, which has for its foundation the death and resurrection of Christ, frequently occurs throughout the writings of Paul, but especially in his Epistle to the Romans.

The expression "from faith to faith" means, on *the principle of faith*, in contrast with *the principle of law*. This, we may say, characterized the apostle's mission. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name." (Ver. 5.) Obedience to the faith, evidently, is in contrast with obedience to the law, as the way of blessing. The *name* of Christ is

now the grand object of faith, and the rule of the believer's life. The power, value, and authority of the Name of Jesus, have also great prominence in the preaching of Peter in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. There, too, the burden of the preacher, is the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. All who had faith then, and since, and who have it now, are associated with the *risen Christ*, and are partakers of the blessings of the gospel of God. But on the other hand, it is said, that the wrath of God is revealed against all who *refuse* obedience to the name of Jesus, whether they be ungodly Gentiles or unrighteous Jews. All is now seen to be "*of God*," whether it be the gospel, salvation, righteousness, or wrath. We are said to be justified *by* God, not merely *before* Him. And, "who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect*?" And again, "If *God* be for us, who can be against us?" This is a great feature of the Epistle to the Romans. God is seen in the foreground, and every thing is spoken of as coming from Him.

Man is thus brought, by faith, into the possession of salvation, without adding anything to it. It remains wholly and entirely the salvation of God. And what a mercy it is so! We are saved according to the thoughts of God. All is of God. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." (Rom. iii. 27.) How perfectly simple the demands—how eternally glorious the results, of the gospel of the grace of God!

Let us dwell on this thought for a moment. It is worthy of our closest study. The sin-stricken heart bows at the feet of Jesus. The truth of the gospel has been acting upon his heart in the power of the Holy Ghost. He is convinced of sin, and fears its consequences; he flees for refuge to the blood of Jesus. What can be more simple, or, in a certain sense, more natural? It is simply fleeing from imminent danger. But there God meets the sinner

—meets him in His own goodness. And now, what must the results be? Who can speak of the blessing he receives? God's heart in its depths of goodness is its measure. But who can say what that is? It is soon said, we affirm, and yet it can never be said. *That which is due to Christ is made over to the believer, by God Himself, and sealed with the Holy Ghost.* "It is God that justifieth." He acts from Himself, and worthy of Himself. The blood of Christ is on the mercy-seat, and He is free to bless the child of faith according to His own goodness. Every soul that honours that blood, is blessed according to its value in God's sight. Therefore, the blessing is infinite; and we can only think of it, and speak of it, as nothing short of that which is due to Him who shed His blood for God's glory, and man's redemption.

This, dear reader, is the gospel of God—the righteousness of God. Christ so revealed and magnified God by His great work on the cross, and in the whole path of His perfect, blessed obedience up to the cross, that He made Him, as it were, His debtor. Hence the fulness, freeness, and delight of the Father's heart, to bless all who honour His Son. This is His grand purpose in the gospel—the honour of His Son. (Psalm lxxxix., Matt. xxii. 1—14.) He knows not, we may say, how much to make of those who honour His Son. This is His love. But God also speaks of this as His righteousness, or His faithfulness to Christ. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just (not merely gracious and merciful) to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Not only do the love and grace of God seek the sinner's salvation now, but His holiness, righteousness, and truth; in virtue of the work of Christ. Glorious truth! But here, observe, we are not told to *pray* for the forgiveness of our sins, but to confess them. Scripture is always consistent; and in the light of this passage we must only "confess our sins," as we could not pray to God to be "faithful and just." That He will be,

and that He is, in bestowing upon us the love and glory due to Christ. I confess that I know no other ground or measure of blessing for the believer. It is due to the great workman, and God's appreciation of His work. He has glorified Christ at His own right hand in heaven, and He exalts to the same glory, all who have faith in Him. They are glorified together.

What a light, we may exclaim, this great truth sheds on the work of Christ! What a glory it unfolds, as due to the risen Christ, and to all who are associated with Him. God is glorified—Christ exalted, and His friends are *with Him, and as Him, where He is*. What perfect blessedness—what perfect happiness! Who would not love, trust, and worship the name of Jesus! The heart is filled with a peace that passeth all understanding. It is perfect rest. Numberless passages in the New Testament, and in the Old, too, are made plain in the light of this precious truth. The Bible becomes a new book. Take the following as an example of what we mean. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.” 1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. x. 4; iii. 22.

Truly, we may say, this is a glorious gospel—the good news of the glory, and of the righteousness of God! What a privilege to be called of God to preach it! Surely, anything but great plainness of speech, singleness of purpose, and earnestness of heart, in preaching such a gospel, must be wrong—must be a mockery of the sinner's condition, and an injury to the grace and truth of God. But, alas! preachers are sometimes tempted to think of themselves.

There is the temptation to try how nicely the discourse can be arranged, how well delivered, how successful in arresting the attention of the audience, as with power; but all the while, the poor outside sinner, standing on the slippery brink of hell, is not singled out, or a word spoken directly to himself. He goes away as ignorant of the way of salvation as he came. It has been all too high, or unsuited for his state of mind. Oh, what must the responsibility of the preacher be! Who can estimate the results of even one occasion of preaching the gospel!

We all know how deeply a congregation may be moved by an earnest heart, and how each one may be reached, even when comparatively little truth is unfolded. Its power must be felt. In illustration of this fact, we may refer to a scene which took place last winter, though it does not, strictly speaking, touch the province of preaching.

A very rough-living mechanic was obliged to drop work, and take to his bed. His constitution gave way under his course of life, though a young man. The Lord blessed the continued visits of christian friends. He became a completely changed man, and thoroughly happy in the Lord. Shortly before he died, he began to feel a great desire to speak to *all* his old shopmates, and associates in sin. It was not expected that he would live out the day, and as he was so weak, he was advised not to think of it. But no, he felt as if he could not die in peace until he had warned them of their danger. His desire was sent to the shop, and several came. But what a scene—what emotion, now that they are face to face! The dying man was partly raised up from his pillow. His now pallid cheek, sunken eyes, and want of breath, greatly affected the men. Fixing his eyes on an old familiar face, and in wonderful energy he said, in something like the following words, “Harry, you are to meet me in heaven—I am going to heaven—but, if you are to meet me in heaven, Harry, you must believe

on Jesus now. Jesus died for us. We must believe in Him." This was about the extent of his address; but, with a little rest between, he appealed to each of the men by name, praying and beseeching them, with great fervour and agony of spirit, to give up their sinful ways, believe on Jesus now, and meet him in heaven at last. Soon after this exertion he fell asleep in Jesus, a monument of sovereign grace; but ere long to arise and shine on the plains of glory, as an eternal monument of plain speaking to a plain man.

"Angels rejoice o'er sinners saved,
And heaven with rapture swell,
As tidings rise up to the throne,
That souls are saved from hell.

*"Another soul to Jesus born,
And ransomed from the fall;
To thee, O Lord, the praise we give,
Thou, thou shalt have it all."*

We now return to the subject of preaching the gospel in simplicity. What can be simpler than to say, you are lost, but God has so loved us as to give His Son to die for us that we might be saved. He that believeth hath everlasting life. If you have sinned against God, and have not faith in Christ, you are lost. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" are pointed words from the lips of Jesus Himself. And nothing could be plainer than the words of Peter after the day of Pentecost, or of Paul in the synagogue of Antioch. We forget how ignorant the natural man is of spiritual things, and how difficult it is to make him understand the plainest facts, or feel concerned in view of the most fearful results. Though all alive to that which is earthly, they are dead to that which is heavenly. Who has not felt the difficulty—the heart-breaking difficulty—of getting the heart of man to believe in the all-sufficiency of the work of Christ. Nevertheless, it is worth all pains and labour to

win a soul for Him—to become a fool for Christ, if the great end can be gained. But whichever way it ends, such is the plainness and fulness of the testimony to God's grace, that all who hear it must be left without excuse. They are responsible. They can no longer occupy a middle place. Henceforth, each one must stand before God, either as

A RECEIVER, OR A REJECTER, OF CHRIST.

This is a solemn consideration for both preachers and hearers. How needful for the preacher to be plain and faithful, that he may be clear from the blood of all men; and how needful for the hearer to see that he neglects not God's great salvation. For, as the apostle says, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Escape, rest assured, oh, thoughtless soul, is impossible! This is a strong way of insisting on the certainty of divine judgment overtaking all who neglect this salvation. And in proportion to the greatness of the salvation that is neglected, must be the greatness of the condemnation that falls on those who neglect it. The very thought of having slighted by indifference, or despised with contempt, so great and glorious a deliverance, must be gall and wormwood to the soul. The following lines are said to have been penned by one in this condition shortly before he died. But, alas! it was the end of a godless life.

"My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flower, the fruit of life is gone,
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone."

How melancholy! What forcible words these are! But what a difference between the death-bed of this highly-gifted nobleman, and the death-bed of the poor mechanic! The one had Christ; the other had the world in its fulness and glory. The one fell asleep in Jesus amidst the shouts of victory, the other died amidst the terrors of an awful eternity.

But now, why, oh why, my fellow sinner, be indifferent another moment? This nobleman was cut down suddenly in the prime of life. He caught cold, I believe, which brought on inflammation. But nothing could arrest its progress. Oh, why wilt thou die—die the second death? There is eternal life for thee in Christ. Why not accept this choice gift of heaven? Why delay this great business? It ought to be the one business of thy earthly days. Why not now, accept from the hands of love, this priceless treasure—the salvation of thy soul? Jesus died for sinners, and His love is the same to-day as it was the day He died on Calvary. Still He waits, and still He says, “Come unto me.....I will give you rest.” And still He affirms, “Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.” Oh! that He may have thy immediate, deep, heartfelt response, “Lord Jesus, I come.” Be assured that all Scripture is clear and strong as to the result of gospel hearing. And that all who do not believe in Jesus, and trust in Him, are classed with the despisers of salvation. There can only be but two great results as to the final issue. Neutral ground is unknown in Scripture. There is no half-way house to heaven. It must either be the blessed home above, or the fearful hell beneath—the bright glories on high, or the lake of fire below.

But the word of God decides the solemn question now, as to every gospel hearer. We have not to wait until we reach the judgment-seat. “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” John iii. 18, 19.

And the great apostle, too, when preaching the gospel, applies the solemn warning of the prophet to the un-

believing Jews, then before him. "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 40, 41.

Here, then, we have this solemn truth, in the words of holy Scripture. Each one that crosses the threshold as he leaves the place of preaching, is seen by God, either as a *receiver*, or a *despiser* of Christ. There can only be two classes. Most solemn, searching thought! Would to God, cries my soul, that gospel-hearers would lay this to heart! To which class, let me ask, does my dear reader belong? Ask thyself, I pray thee, this plain question. All others, to thee, compared with this one, are unimportant. Stay not till another opportunity of preaching comes round. That may never come to thee. Stay not till thou hast laid down this paper, or come to its close. Look to Jesus now—believe in Jesus now—flee to Jesus now—trust the blood of Jesus now—lean all thy weight on the Person of Jesus now; and a full Christ shall be thine—a whole Christ shall be thine. Yes, my dear reader, the Christ of God—the salvation of God—the righteousness of God—the peace of God—the glory of God—thine, thine now, thine through all thy pilgrim days, and thine throughout the countless ages of eternity.

“FAREWELL, vain world! I’ve had enough of thee;
 I long a brighter, better world to see,
 I long the happy saints above to join,
 I long with them to sing, with them to shine;
 I long my Saviour’s blessed face to see,
 I long to be from sin for ever free;
 I long to reach my bright, my blest abode,
 I long for the embraces of my God;
 I long Thy promised rest, O Lord, to share,
 I long for glory,—when shall I be there?”



S E R V I C E.

TRUE service begins with Christ, who is the Head, and when Christ is forgotten, then the service is defective; it has lost connection with the spring and fountain of all service, because it is from the Head that *all* the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, increaseth. The body is of Christ, and He loves it as He loves Himself, and every one who would serve it, will best learn to do so, by knowing His heart and purposes towards it. In a word, it is Christ who serves, though it may be through us. We are but "joints and bands." If we are not *derivative* and *communicative from Christ*, we are useless. To be useful, my eye and heart must be on Christ, and not on the issue of my service; though if true to Him, the end will vindicate me too, however disheartening the interval. He who judges of his service by present appearances will judge by the blossom, and not by the fruit; and, after all, the service is not for the sake of the Church, but for the sake of Christ; and if He be served in the Church, though the Church own it not, yet, Christ being served, He will own it. Now the constant effort of Satan is to disconnect, in our minds, Christ from our service; and this, much more than any of us, perhaps, have fully discovered. Whether in reading, or praying, or speaking, how seldom, if we judge ourselves, do we find that we act simply as towards Christ, and Him alone! How often may sentimentality and natural feeling affect us in our service, instead of simple love to Him!

“ Thrice happy he who serveth
 The Lord with heart and soul!
 Whose purpose never swerveth,
 Who loves the Lord's control.
 With single eye,—unfearing,—
 With simple, child-like faith—
 The master's accents hearing;
 He doth 'whate'er He saith.' ”

ALWAYS CONFIDENT.

SINCE God for us delivered up His Son,
 And laid on Him the weight of all our guilt ;
 And by His resurrection made us one ;
 In Him accepted, and upon Him built,—

We're always confident ! though Satan tries
 To weaken confidence by many snares ;
 But GOD, who cleanses, clothes, and justifies,
 Has also glorified His chosen heirs.

Yea, ALWAYS CONFIDENT ! no racking doubt,
 No groundless terror shall possess our hearts ;
 We know the One who knows no casting out,
 And 'tis HIMSELF this confidence imparts !

We're always confident, the Lord will stem
 Fears, sins, and sorrows, fast as they arise ;
 And faith, triumphant, asks, " Who shall condemn,
 When GOD accepts, and clothes, and justifies ? "

Oh ! timid Christian, let no terrors dim
 The wondrous glories of Christ's finish'd work !
 We're made the righteousness of God in Him !
 With such assurance terror cannot lurk.

Soon shall we rise to meet Him in the air,
 (For sov'reign grace has meetened us for this,)
 Clothed in His comeliness, and with Him share
 You blessed home of unimagined bliss.

A little longer, and the tear-dim'd eye
 Shall on the glory of our Jesus gaze ;
 And hearts now broken, throb with holy joy ;
 And tongues now murm'ring, celebrate His praise.

DEVOTEDNESS: WHAT IS IT?

(PART II.)

HAVING, in our paper for September, sought to lay down what we consider to be the essential ground of all true devotedness—namely, an earnest, personal faith in the living God—we shall now, in dependence upon divine guidance and teaching, proceed to consider, in the second place,

THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTEDNESS.

The two things are intimately connected, inasmuch as it is impossible for any one to have to do with God, in the realities of a life of faith, without having his heart drawn out in true worship, and we may say, at the outset, that the spirit of worship is, in very deed, the spirit that must ever characterize true devotedness. It is faith alone that gives God His proper place, and leaves the scene clear for Him to display Himself in His own proper glory. Hence it is that faith enjoys ten thousand occasions of realizing what God is to all who trust Him, and diligently seek Him; and each fresh realization draws forth fresh strains of praise. Thus a lively faith ministers to a spirit of worship, and a spirit of worship is the vehicle through which to convey the experiences of a lively faith. The more we trust God, the more we shall know Him; and the more we know Him, the more we must praise Him.

We have little idea of how much we lose by our want of simple confidence in God. Unbelief ever hinders the display of divine power and goodness. "He could there do not many mighty works because of their unbelief." This holds good in our individual history, every day. God will not show Himself if our unbelief fills the field of vision with other objects. It is impossible that God and the creature can occupy the same platform, or jointly form the ground of the soul's confidence. It must be God *alone*,

from first to last. "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God; for my expectation is from him. He *only* is my rock and my salvation. . . . Trust in him *at all times*." Such is the language of faith—"only and at all times." This is the ground—the solid and unassailable ground of true devotedness, and the soul that really occupies this ground will ever be clothed with a spirit of worship. Faith counts on God; God reveals Himself to faith; and faith responds in accents of praise and adoration. Nothing can be simpler, and nothing on earth more blessed. Faith can ever address God in the following words, "Lord, thou knowest me; we are on the same old terms." Blessed terms! May we understand them better!

There is nothing in all this world like having to do with God in the secret of our own souls, and in all the details of our personal history, day by day. It imparts a calmness not easily ruffled, a stability not easily moved, a holy independence of human thinkings and speakings, a moral elevation that lifts the soul above the reach of surrounding influences. There is an atmosphere enwrapping this world—an atmosphere so dense, so murky, so depressing, that nothing but the eye of faith can pierce it; our own hearts, too, are full of unbelief, ever ready to depart from the living God, constantly sending up infidel reasonings from within, or hearkening to infidel suggestions from without, and therefore we do so greatly need to have the foundations of our personal confidence strengthened, so that our devotedness may be of a more decided type.

But in contemplating the *spirit* of devotedness as illustrated in the life of Abraham, we must look somewhat closely at the facts of his instructive history, especially at those facts which immediately precede his call to Mount Moriah. For example, in chapter xx. we find him called to apply the sharp knife of self-judgment to an old root of evil which had found a lodgment in his heart for many a long day. This self-same root may teach the

writer and the reader a deeply solemn and an eminently practical lesson.

When Abraham started on his career, we may notice two things, namely, first, that he was clogged and hindered by a natural tie; and, secondly, that he was secretly influenced by a root of moral evil. The natural tie was snapped at Charran, by the hand of death, and Abraham was set free, and enabled to get up to the place to the which God had called him. (Compare carefully Genesis xi. 31, 32—xii. 1, with Acts vii. 2—4.) He was told to get up out of his country and from his kindred, and come into the land of Canaan; but he brought some of his kindred with him, and stopped short at Charran. There his father died, and thereupon Abraham made his way to the true point of divine revelation.

The ties of nature, right enough, and really of God, in their proper place, are sure, if not kept in their place, to hinder true devotedness. It was all right and very beautiful in Elisha to love, with filial tenderness, his father and mother; but, when Elijah had flung around him the prophetic mantle, it was entirely below the mark of a deep-toned and genuine devotedness to say, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." Natural ties are like honey, and we must beware of how much we eat, and when. Was ever filial love so tender as that which glowed in the bosom of the Man, Christ Jesus? Was ever subjection to parental authority so divinely perfect as His? And yet when the claims of service were to be responded to—when the integrity of true Nazariteship was to be maintained, He could say, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" And again, "Who is my mother?" It was only the true and perfect servant who knew how to adjust conflicting claims, and keep each in its place, and hence from the same lips flowed forth the accents of faithful Nazariteship, at one time, and words of melting tenderness at another.

Abraham, then, was hindered in his course by the tie of nature, until that tie was dissolved by death ; but the root of moral evil seems to have clung to him for a much longer period of time. What was that root? Alas! reader, it was one which we can only too well understand, namely, a little bit of unbelief, clothing itself in the form of prudent reserve, in reference to his relationship with Sarah.

“What!” it may be said, “unbelief in the heart of the father of the faithful!” Just so. It is a remarkable fact, illustrated in the history of the most eminent saints of God, that their most signal failure appears in the very thing for which they were signalized. Moses, the meekest man in all the earth, spake unadvisedly with his lips. Job, the model of patience, opened his mouth, and cursed his day. Abraham, the father of the faithful, carried in his heart, for many a long day, and through many a changing scene, a root of unbelief. This root first sprouted in the land of Egypt, whither Abraham had gone to escape the famine that raged in the land of Canaan ; and, as might be expected, the sprouting brought trouble on himself and others. “And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon : therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife : and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake ; and my soul shall live because of thee.”

Reader, remember, the Holy Ghost has penned this faithful record for our learning and admonition ; and truly it is most solemn to think that such a man as Abraham could be so governed by the fear of personal danger as to expose the object of his heart's fond affections, and to deny his relationship to her. True, this conduct was the result of his being in a wrong position, for had he re-

mained in the place to which God had called him, there would have been no need to deny his wife. But, as it generally happens, one wrong step led to another, and hence, having gone into Egypt through fear of the famine, he there denies his wife through fear of death.

“And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.” What marvellous grace to Abraham! God, who ever delights to rebuke His people’s fears, as well as to answer their faith, covered His erring servant with the shield of His powerful protection. Abraham’s life and Sarah’s virtue were both preserved in safety behind that impenetrable shield, and the house of Egypt’s monarch was made to feel the heavy stroke of Jehovah’s righteous rod. “And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, she is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife.” Abraham had evidently exposed himself in all this matter, and hence, although God protects him, He yet allows Pharaoh to rebuke him.

It is well to see this. When the man of God steps off the path of faith and christian integrity, he, at once, exposes himself to the men of this world, and he need not marvel if they chastise him with an unsparing hand. Had Abraham remained in Canaan, he would not have been reproved by Pharaoh in Egypt. It is better far to starve, if it must be so, in the path of obedience, than gain abundance by the sacrifice of faith and moral uprightness. May we have grace to remember this at all times! It is easy enough to put these things down on paper; but when the moment of temptation arises, it is another thing. Still, we must remember that the Spirit of God has penned the history of Abraham for our profit, and it is well for us to ponder its holy lessons.

And, now, let us enquire, as to the effect produced in Abraham by Pharaoh’s sharp reproof. Did it prove effectual

in delivering him from the root of evil which had called it forth? Alas! no. So far as the inspired history informs us, Abraham received the rebuke in silence, and went on his way; but he carried the root along with him to sprout again, after many days. He got back to Canaan, to his altar and to his tent; he displayed a noble disinterestedness with regard to Lot, and received a fresh revelation from God; he obtained a splendid victory over Cherdalaomer and his confederates, and refused the tempting offer of the king of Sodom; he was comforted by fresh assurances and promises from God, and manifested a child-like faith which was counted unto him for righteousness. In short, he passed through a variety of scenes and circumstances, with varied exercises of soul no doubt; but, all the while, the moral root, to which we are directing the reader's attention, remained unjudged and unconfessed. It had sprouted and produced its bitter fruit; but, as yet, the sharp knife of self-judgment remained to be applied to it; and it is not until we reach the twentieth chapter of Genesis that this root again appears above the surface, in the matter of Abimelech, King of Gerar. Here we have the same scene enacted over again, after years of rich experience of divine goodness and loving-kindness. The King of Egypt and his house had been brought into trouble before, and the King of Gerar and his house are brought into trouble now; for Jehovah reproveth kings for Abraham's sake, though the kings had reason to reprove Abraham because of his ways.

"Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou that thou hast done this thing?" This was bringing the matter to a point. There was no escaping such plain dealing, and therefore Abraham

frankly opens his heart, and unlocks that secret chamber which had been kept shut for so many years. He tells out all, and exposes every fibre of the root which had proved the source of so much trouble to himself and others. Let us hearken to the unreserved confession of this dear and honoured man of God. "And Abraham said, because I thought, surely, the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me, at every place whither we shall come, say of me, he is my brother."

Here was the root of the whole matter. And now why do we dwell upon it? Why seek to unfold it in such detail? Simply for the real, spiritual profit and moral health of the Christian reader. Have we not all our roots? Yes, verily, deep, strong, and bitter roots—roots which have been the source of a world of sorrow and shame to ourselves, and of trouble to those with whom we had to do. Well, then, these roots must be reached and judged, for so long as they remain unreached and unjudged, it is impossible—utterly impossible that we can reach the higher stages of the path of devotedness. Need we remind the reader that it is not, by any means, a question of life or salvation? Need we recall him to the thesis of our paper, which is simply this, "What is devotedness?" Our one grand object, just now, is to raise the tone of devotedness in the soul of every Christian who may scan these lines. But we know that devotedness, in order to be true, steady, and effective, must rest on the proper ground, and breathe the proper spirit. That ground is faith, and that spirit is worship; and though it be quite true that a soul may occupy, in the main, the ground of faith, and breathe a spirit of worship, while yet there are many roots in the

heart unreached and unjudged, we are, nevertheless, fully persuaded that so long as there is any hidden root of evil in the heart, any chamber which we keep locked, and refuse to have properly lighted and ventilated, the higher stages of practical devotedness are yet beyond and above us.

God knows we do not want to depress the heart of the reader. Indeed, if our lines have aught of a depressing tendency, their effect should be realized first and most of all by the writer himself. But, no; we would fain encourage and exhort; and it is with a simple view to these desirable ends that we now turn directly to the reader, and put this plain and pointed question home to him, Hast thou any secret reserve in thy soul?—any hidden root of evil deep down in thy heart and mind?—is there aught that thou art keeping back from the action of the light and from the edge of the knife? Search, and see! Search diligently! Do not deceive thyself, nor let Satan deceive thee. Deal honestly and truly with thine own soul in this matter. Let no false application of the doctrines or principles of grace prevent thee from exercising a most rigid censorship over thy ways, and over thy character, and over thy heart with all its motive springs, and hidden chambers. Be assured of it, there is an urgent demand for real heart work on the part of all who long to tread the highest stages of the divine life. We live in a day which is earning for itself, in the judgment of every honest, and earnest spirit, the title of “A day of shams.” Yes, reader, “sham” seems stamped upon all around, whether in the department of politics, commerce, or manufactures: and, most assuredly, much of the Christianity of the day forms no sort of exception to the rule. Hence the demand for *reality* on the part of the true Christian, and, unquestionably, all reality must find its source in the *heart*. If the heart be not right and real with God, we cannot be real in anything.

But there is another point to which we must refer, in the life of Abraham, ere we close this part of our subject. It is presented in the twenty-first of Genesis. The bond-woman and her son are cast out of the house. We do not dwell upon this point, but merely name it for the purpose of pointing out the deep moral conveyed to us in this portion of Abraham's history. The heart and the house had both to come under judgment, ere the call to *Moriah* fell on the patriarch's ear. God was about to call His beloved servant into the very highest position that man can occupy—to demand of him an expression of devotedness of the very highest order—to pass him through a crucible of the very highest degree of intensity; and, be it observed, that ere He did so, the root of moral evil had been reached in the heart, and the legal element had been expelled from the house. All this is deeply practical. God deals with moral realities. If we are to walk with Him, along the high and holy pathway of pure devotedness, the heart and the house must be duly regulated. If the real desire of our hearts be after a closer walk with God, we must see to it that we are not retaining anything within or about us that would not comport with that nearness. Our God is infinitely gracious, merciful, and patient. He can bear with us, and wait upon us, in marvellous tenderness; but, at the same time, we have to remember that we forfeit present blessing and future reward through our lack of earnest devotedness. There is nothing of legality in this, it is but the just application of the principle of grace in which we stand.

“And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham.” Why is it we never read such words as these, “It came to pass that God did tempt Lot?” Alas! Lot was never in a moral condition to warrant his being so highly honoured. Sodom tempted Lot; but it was no temptation at all to Abraham. What a contrast between Lot in the cave, and Abraham on Mount *Moriah*! And yet they were both saved. But,

ah! what a poor thing to be content to be saved! Ought we not to sigh after those spiritual heights which lie beyond? Should we not long to give expression to a more ardent devotedness? Oh! that our *houses* and our *hearts* were in a moral condition acceptable in the sight of God, so that we might enjoy habitual nearness to Himself, and unbroken communion with Him. This is our privilege, and we should never be satisfied with anything less.

It was a high honour conferred upon Abraham when God called him into the place of trial—when He asked him for “his son, his only son Isaac.” It was an elevated point in the patriarch’s career, and that he felt it to be such we may judge from the spirit in which he responded to the divine call, and in which he repaired to the scene of sacrifice. “I and the lad will go yonder and WORSHIP.” Here the true spirit of devotedness most blessedly unfolds itself. To give up his only son—the object of his affections—the channel of all God’s promises—to lay this one as a victim on the altar—to see him consumed to ashes—what was it all? Just an act of worship. This was real work indeed. It was no empty lip profession—no saying, “I go, sir,” and yet not going at all. “Abraham believed God.” Here lay the secret of it all. He had learnt to yield an unquestioning credence and an implicit obedience to the word of the Lord, and therefore when called to lay his Isaac upon the altar—that Isaac for whom he had longed and waited and trusted—when called to yield him as a sacrifice, he bows his head, and says, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship.”

Thank God, that there ever lived such a man as Abraham—that there was ever enacted such a scene as that upon Mount Moriah—and that we have so vividly and forcibly presented to our hearts, the *ground* and the *spirit* of true devotedness!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

"WE SEE JESUS."

IT is very blessed, no doubt, to have right thoughts and feelings about divine things; but the question is, how to induce them and maintain them? A legal spirit, we know, never will; it "gendereth to bondage." The law never made any one happy; for supposing we could keep it perfectly, we have only done our duty; but if we break it in the least, we incur its awful penalty. A soul occupied with its own feelings, is in some respects worse still; for then the feelings govern, and they are ever changing, though seldom in the right direction.

But how different, when the heart is set at liberty in the presence of God, through the work of Christ! It is then "free indeed," and beyond the government of its feelings; and then it tastes for the first time the sweetness of perfect peace, and the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. When Christ is known as the Risen Man in heaven, and the eye kept steadily fixed on Him, we shall have thoughts and feelings answering to His position there. And our thoughts and feelings will be *maintained* in the proportion that our contemplation of Him is *maintained*. Our judgment both of heavenly and earthly things will thereby be according to the mind of Christ. Both are seen in their true light when the eye is single. "But," as the apostle says, "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." Heb. xi. 8, 9.

Here the apostle states two things—what we *do* see, and what we do *not* see. With regard to earth, we do not yet see all things put under Christ; with regard to heaven, we see Him there in power and glory. But in the intelligence and enjoyment of Christ in resurrection, faith contemplates the lower scene in its relation to Him. When we are near

enough to Jesus, He covers the eye. Men and things are seen relatively to Him. Thus, and thus only, is our estimate of earthly things correct. Christ is not in earth's fairest scenes—the eye sees Him not there. The busy, active, crowded, and it may be, gorgeous, scene is empty. The glory of all nations, tongues, and peoples, may be concentrated within the limits of the eye's vision; still, He is not there—all its glory fades before the eye of faith—the thought of His absence dims its brightest lustre. But, alas! this is not always so. It sometimes happens that Christians have got so far away from Christ in heart, that they become engrossed in the affairs of this life, and some can even visit and enjoy the poor empty, tinselled shows of this world's vanity. What could be more lamentable? They forget that *death's stamp* is deeply graven on everything this side of resurrection. But such actions clearly prove that the heart must have been away from Christ for some time. Such points are only reached step by step.

Even the natural man himself, although he knows nothing better, will own that such things are but the mere glitter of human vanity, and all vexation of spirit. But in faith's estimation, everything is empty which Christ does not fill; and there, it has to confess—His hand is not seen in the whole assemblage of this world's glories. They are not yet under His hand—they are not yet the reflection of His glory. Hence, an important question arises, Whose hand are they under—of whose glory are they the reflection? Faith's ready answer is—What is not of the Father is of the world—what is not of Christ is of Satan—what is not of the Spirit is of the flesh. "We see not yet all things put under him."

We have only to wait "a little while," and "the world to come" shall be put in subjection under the Son of man. The expression, "world to come," does not mean either heaven or hell, as is generally supposed, but the dispensation to come, or the millennial age. We could not speak of

heaven or hell as “to come,” they are *now*. But we all know that the millennium is to come—the period of Christ’s manifested reign over the heavens and the earth, as gathered together in one. Then it will be quite right for the believer to enjoy the world in all its glory to his heart’s content. The Lord’s name will then be excellent in all the earth, and His glory above the heavens. (Ps. viii.) But, till then, he must pass through it as a stranger and a pilgrim. Our citizenship is in heaven; we cannot be citizens of both heaven and earth at the same time; once we were citizens of this world, now we are citizens of heaven, and ought to walk, though still here, as such. We no longer belong to the old world out of which the Lord has called us, but to the new world into which He is leading us. What a good report the Spirit gives of the pilgrim fathers on this point. “And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb. xi. 15, 16.) What a noble testimony this is! “God is not ashamed to be called their God.” Happy for the believer when the Lord is not ashamed of the place he takes in this world, or rather outside of it!

“ Gate of my heart, fly open wide,
 Shrine of my heart, spread forth,
 The treasure will in thee abide,
 Greater than heaven and earth.
 Away with all this poor world’s treasures,
 And all this vain world’s tasteless pleasures,
 My treasure is in heaven;
 For I have found true riches now,—
 My treasure, Christ, my Lord, art thou,
 Thy blood, so freely given!”

Let us now turn for a moment to the second thing—what we *do* see. “We see Jesus.” This is more impor-

tant to us than the coming millennium. He who bore our sins on the cross, and suffered death for us, is on the throne. What could be more grateful to us? And what a proof to us that our sins are gone! This ought to be the complete settlement of every question—the perfect rest of the heart, and the living spring of joyous worship. The first glimpse of Jesus crowned with glory and honour should separate the heart for ever from the world which crucified Him; and, practically, unite it to heaven. It should change completely the thoughts and feelings, by transferring them all to Him who is there. All we love is there—all our interests are there. This is the only way of becoming heavenly minded. We can never become so by *trying*; we must be occupied with a heavenly object—we must “see Jesus crowned with glory and honour.”

True, most true, there are many still here that we love, and many may be the tender ties and interests that we cherish, but everything is to be viewed in the light of the risen Jesus, and loved according to our connection with Him. But there are few things that we realize so little as our *resurrection life*.

We ought ever to bear in mind, that when Christ died, we died in Him, and left the old world by means of death. “I am crucified with Christ,” says Paul, “nevertheless I live.” But we arose again from the dead in Christ, and entered the new world in the power of *resurrection life*. We were quickened together with Christ—raised up together, and seated together in heavenly places in Christ. Now, we are said to be “in Christ Jesus;” and being in Him we must be where He is. The natural mind may be unable to see the meaning of such truths, but faith has no difficulty. It sees things as God sees them.

What then do we see when we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour? Most surely, we see our place and image in Him there. How simple, yet how powerful! It is the proper action and power of faith. Christ is the

divine expression—the perfect definition of every Christian’s position in the presence of God! Oh! what a truth this is, and what a power it has when enjoyed in communion with the mind of heaven! The more we contemplate Him—the more intensely and fixedly the eye gazes on Him there, the more will our thoughts and feelings become heavenly. “But we all, with open [unveiled] 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.” (2 Cor. iii. 18.) This is the only way of becoming spiritually minded—the only path to true happiness—the only ground of heavenly worship, and of continual joy in the Lord.

Take then thy rest, thou weary soul, trouble no more! Thy once humbled Jesus is now on the throne. Surely it is all well with Him there. But, oh! marvellous, blessed truth, not more so with Him than with thee, though thou hast not yet actually reached that blessed home above. His title is thine. Keep looking to Him, there is immense power in the eye. How often thine eye may have betrayed thy heart through its wanderings after unworthy objects, but now let thine eye sanctify thy heart undividedly for thy Lord.

His word endureth for ever. And what saith that word, doubting soul, to thee and to me? “As he is, so are we in this world.” Hast thou had some difficulty as to the full meaning of the expression, “We see Jesus?” Thou canst have none here, surely. These words, remember, are the words of God! Are they not wonderful? They express our living union with Christ; and they plainly assure us, that as He now is amidst all the glory and blessedness of heaven; *so are we*, in the sight of God, though still in great weakness, and in a world of sin, condemnation, and death. Let nothing, my fellow Christian, rob thy soul of this heaven-born blessedness, though feeble in thyself, and still exposed to many temptations.

Oh! that we may calmly, sweetly, happily, continually, gaze on our Jesus, thus crowned with glory and honour! And may we not forget, when looking on Him in His glory and beauty, that we are looking, in one sense, on ourselves. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." The two passages on which we have been dwelling are fitted and intended to enrich and strengthen the soul. Christ in glory for the eye, and the word of Christ for the heart. Had Peter only kept his eye on the Person of Christ, and His word, "Come," in his heart, he would have walked as securely on the stormy sea as the Lord Himself.

" Thus far by grace preserved,
 Each moment speeds us on ;
 The crown and kingdom are reserved
 Where Christ is gone.
 When cloudless morning shines,
 We shall His glory share ;
 In pleasant places are the lines ;
 The home how fair."



RELIGIOUSNESS *VERSUS* CHRISTIANITY.

I NEVER met with a person so thoroughly under the power of mere *religiousness* as a woman I visited last week, and whose case I desire to bring before the readers of "Things New and Old"—its connection with that recorded in the June number will be obvious.

It was in a lonely cottage, far away from town and village, that this woman lived, and where I spent nearly an hour with her; she was free in conversation, and apparently candid and sincere, but teeming with legality. All her aim seemed to be to ward off Christ, as the salvation which God is extending to poor sinners—His free gift

to faith. She was a poor, unlettered woman, and afflicted in body too; but so readily did she meet the truth put before her, with her own thoughts about it, that I felt Satan to be as really instigating her as ever he had instigated Eve to make the truth of God into a lie. She fenced with the truth most cunningly, and I felt afterwards that it was the deepest lesson I had learnt for years, as to the reality of 2 Corinthians iv. 3, 4, 6. What a terrible and real thing is the power of Satan, which only the power of the Holy Ghost can cope with! How blessed for us to know that, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world!"

"Faith, too, that trusts the blood through grace,
From that same love we gain,
Else, sweetly as it suits our case,
The gift had been in vain."

For a good while I pressed upon her God's abounding love in Christ, but she was "not good enough" for that; I told her it was much more likely that she did not yet feel herself bad enough, that God's grace met poor sinners just *as* they were, and that down here in a sinful world, just *where* they were Christ came, as God's gift. She said she knew that, but she knew also, that she "must seek Him." I told her she had no seeking to do, for Christ was the Seeker, that if salvation depended on her seeking, she was in a poor case; that He had come to do all the seeking Himself, that He seeks and saves the lost, and is "found of them who sought Him not, is made manifest unto them that asked not after Him." I told her that if she were famished for food, and I brought a loaf of bread into her cottage and set it before her, she must surely see that it would be strange infatuation if, instead of at once partaking of my bounty, for which she was perishing, she were to tell me she must first seek for it.

But she would not have this illustration, she said that

was a mere human thing of the world, and religion was very different. I showed her it was precisely the sort of illustration the Lord Himself used in John vi., that He there showed He was the *true bread*, given of the Father from heaven, and that it did not say, "Except ye *seek*," but "except ye *eat*, ye have no life in you." Faith, said I, lays hold of Christ, God's gift, apprehends it, partakes of it, eats it, drinks it, and this is *eternal life*. Thus, by simply believing in Jesus, the full and blessed salvation which God had wrought, becomes mine at once and for eternity. She replied that she always had believed in Jesus, but she knew that saying that would do her no good till she got her "heart changed," and she was doing all she could; she prayed the Lord to help her every day, she was sure.

I asked her if she could tell me any case in which Christ or His apostles directed any poor sinner to get his heart changed, or to do all he could, or to pray to the Lord to help him. She was much struck with this, and smiling in derision said, Well, if sinners should not pray, she thought nobody should, and if they did not, she could not tell how they were to be saved; that they were told to ask and to knock, and she thought that was the way she was to be saved, and she always should think so.

I showed her that this was not the gospel; and again I put before her the glad tidings of the finished work of Christ, the simple gospel of an accomplished salvation, wrought of God in the Person of Christ, God's gift, and now announced to every creature for the acceptance of faith; that God had spoken of this so plainly, that "the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein." I repeated some of the gospel declarations but she discarded them as being *only words*. I told her that God saved poor sinners by such words, that we are begotten again by the word of truth, that the Lord Jesus used such words to Nicodemus and to the woman of Samaria; and in the

cases of the Philippian jailor and Cornelius, the Holy Ghost inspired the apostles to speak words by which they were saved. And in Romans x. we read, "The *word* is nigh thee, even in thy mouth," &c., verses 8, 9, 10. That Christ was the living Word, of which the written word spake, that there could not really be faith in the word of God without salvation; that where souls were really conscious of the burden of sin, really in earnest for salvation, they took God at His word, and found Him to the joy and deliverance of their souls. I asked her if she were indeed in earnest; she replied that she was, but was waiting, hoping, to be more so. I again put CHRIST before her as *everything at once*, but only to be again set aside by her thoughts and her doings.

I then spoke to her very solemnly, and said it was evident she was resolved to have anything but Christ, that all she seemed bent upon was to repel Him, and that she only heard of Him to reject Him again and again; that I believed her to be thoroughly under the power of Satan, and in a dreadful condition of soul, for she professed to be in earnest for salvation, while mocking God, and making Him a liar. I said Satan would let her go on thinking, and seeking, and doing, and waiting, as long as she liked; and while she was resolved upon doing without Christ, in her efforts to be saved in her own way, Satan would let her go on praying also; that although she appeared to be flattering herself with the thought that these things were in some way meritorious and acceptable, unless her thinkings gave place to what God had said, and her doings to what God had done—she would assuredly become the prey of him, whose willing servant she appeared to be, for "the wages of sin is death." This only elicited another derisive smile, and I left her not less astonished than grieved, for I had heard a good account of her from the lady who accompanied me, and hoped to have found a heart prepared for the word of life.

Oh! how blessed is it then to pour into the open wounds of a sin-stricken soul, the wine and the oil—the precious blood of Jesus, in the unction of the Holy Ghost. But how sad! how solemn! how afflicting, to behold a poor sinner caught in the meshes of Satan's weaving, and yet clinging with the utmost tenacity to every thread which binds him.

Will the readers of "Things New and Old," who have faith for it, ask the Lord to deliver this poor woman from the power of Satan, and give her the blessed knowledge of Jesus, as "God's unspeakable gift?"

W. R.



MY JOY.

THOU art my joy, Lord Jesus! Thou art my glorious sun!
 In the light that shineth from thee, I gladly journey on.
 There is a hidden beauty, a healing, holy light,
 In Thy countenance, uplifted, upon the inward sight.

Oh! purer than the morning, and brighter than the noon,
 And sweeter than the evening, a thousand joys in one—
 Thou brightness of God's glory, and Lord of all above,
 Son of the Father's bosom, and image of His love!

O Jesus! let me *ever* behold my joy, my friend,
 And let my deep communion be with Thee to the end.
 In secret let me see Thee—let all, that Thou hast been,
 And all Thou art, in heaven, outshine before me then.

And let my memory treasure each little word and way,
 Expressing, in its measure, the deeps that in Thee lay.
 Oh! there are joys unspoken, and mounts of sacred light,
 And visions of Thy glory, to bless the seeker's sight.

Then why be like a stranger, or like a passer by,
 When I might hold Thee ever in blissful company?
 O lift Thy face upon me, and keep me by Thy side;
 And fill me with Thy presence, and in my heart abide.

DEVOTEDNESS: WHAT IS IT?

(PART III.)

THE more we ponder the question which has been occupying our attention, namely, What is devotedness? the more we are convinced of its immense practical importance. It puts the soul in immediate contact with the Lord Himself, and opens a path for each one, along which he can move in calm and steady confidence, let his surroundings be what they may.

But just in proportion to the importance of the subject of devotedness is the need of clearness as to the true ground, spirit, and object thereof. We have already sought to present to the reader, the truth as to the first two points; and it now only remains to dwell, for a little, in the third place, on

THE OBJECT OF DEVOTEDNESS.

How much hangs on the answer which the heart gives to this question, "*What is my object in life?*" It is, undoubtedly, one of the very gravest questions which any one can put to himself. It is the object which stamps the character. Let us remember this. What was it that gave character to Abraham's journey to Moriah, and to his actings when he arrived there? What was it that drew the attention of heaven to the scene? Was it the mere fact that a father was going to offer up his son as a sacrifice? Nay; thousands of fathers have done that. Thousands of sons have been sacrificed on the altars of false gods, and that, too, in so-called devotedness. But what was it that distinguished the act of the father of the faithful? It was this—let us hear it and mark it with the heart's deepest attention—"Now I know that *thou fearest God*, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, *from me.*" (Gen. xxii. 12.) Here, we have Abraham's object, and on this point let us meditate for a few moments.

The heart may propose to itself a thousand objects, and these objects may be good enough in themselves, and yet not one of them be *the* object which characterizes christian devotedness. We once knew a man who prayed for seven hours a day. We have seen him on his knees at four o'clock in the morning; and, after the toils of the day, we have seen him on his knees again—till the midnight hour. We have seen him in agonies of devotion. His flesh was worn from his bones by constant kneeling. He was, withal, a blameless, amiable man. Those who marked the course of his daily life could not put their finger on a single moral blemish in his conduct as a man. And yet when we have approached that man in order to whisper into his ear some word about Christ, he has shrunk from us and refused to listen. In a word, he was devoted to his religion; but he hated Christ.

Again, a man may devote himself to philanthropy; he may devote his life and his fortune to the objects of benevolence, and make the most splendid sacrifices in order to carry out his schemes; he may fix the wondering gaze of millions upon his career, and, all the while, be a total stranger to Christ.

But, further, a man may devote himself to what may seem to be the work of the Lord; he may seem to be a laborious student of Scripture; an active, earnest, self-denying evangelist; he may go forth to the fields of foreign mission, leaving his country, his kindred, and his home, in devotion to his work; he may do all this, and much more, and yet not exhibit one atom of true christian devotedness, simply because Christ was not his object in all that in which he was engaged.

All this is deeply solemn. We may be religious, devotional, benevolent, active in the Lord's work, in all its departments, whether as evangelists, pastors, or teachers, and yet not have Christ before our souls at all. A man may start in a work which, to all outward appearance, seems a real

work of God, and he may seem to be most simple in his devotion to that work, and, yet, it may turn out in the end that his heart was engrossed with the work to the total exclusion of Christ as an object. True christian devotedness is embodied in this brief sentence, "To me, to live is Christ." He does not say, "To me to live is *work*"—though where was there ever such a workman, save the perfect Workman? He does not say, "To me to live is religion, or benevolence, or morality," though who more religious, benevolent, or moral, than Paul. It is not that he loved these things less, but he loved Christ more. This makes all the difference. I may wear myself out with religious exercises, such as prayers, fastings, and vigils; I may bestow all my goods to feed the poor; I may give my body to be burnt, and there may not be in all these things one particle of genuine devotedness to Christ.

Is not this a very weighty consideration in this day of religious activity, forms of piety, and schemes of benevolence? Should we not, dear christian reader, look well to the question as to what is our real object? Is it not too true that one may spend a whole life in the exercise of religion and philanthropy, and yet live and die a stranger to that One who is God's only object, heaven's only centre—Christ Jesus? Alas! the truth of this is illustrated in the history of millions. The god of this world is blinding the minds of countless multitudes. And with what does he most effectually blind them? With schemes of benevolence and forms of piety. Oh! Christendom, Christendom, hear it—thy formularies, thy forms, and thy schemes are blinding the minds, hardening the hearts, and searing the consciences, of untold millions.

It is not merely amid the haunts of vice, in all its abominable forms, that God's faithful messengers are called to raise a warning voice, but on the broad and well-trodden highway of religious profession, along which multitudes are rushing to eternal perdition. The devil's grand object is to keep Christ out of the heart, and he cares not by what

means he attains this object. He will use a man's lusts, or he will use his superstitious fears. Forms of vice and forms of piety are all alike to him. He hates Christ, and will seek by all means, to keep souls away from Him. He will let a man be religious, benevolent, amiable, moral; but he will *not, if he can help it, let him be a Christian*; and when any one has, through grace, become a Christian in reality, Satan's one aim is to draw his heart and turn his eye away from Christ. He will seek to engage him with objects professedly christian, in order to divert him from the only object that really forms the Christian—Christ Himself. He will give him lots of work to do, yea, he will overwhelm him with work, and get him a name as a most wonderful workman; and yet, by means of this very work, he will sap the foundation of a man's Christianity, and so deceive and pervert his heart that, in process of time, he will become occupied with himself and his doings, instead of with Christ and His service.

Hence the importance of having the one object ever before the heart, and that object Christ. "To me to live is *Christ.*" "Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son *from me.*" Christ is the great standard for every one and everything. All must be measured by Him. Everything is to be regulated and valued with reference to Him. The question is not, how much work am I doing? but to whom is it done? Searching question! "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it *unto me.*" (Matt. xxv. 34-40.)

Here lies the secret of all acceptable service, and all true devotedness. We may feed the hungry, clothe the

naked, visit the sick, but if the King cannot say, "Ye did it unto me," it will be valueless.

And oh! what a privilege to be allowed to do any little thing for Christ! To be enabled to have Him ever before the heart. It is this which gives real value and true elevation to all that we may be called to do, in this world, whether it be sweeping a crossing or evangelizing a nation. Christian service is that which is done to Christ. Nothing else deserves the name; nothing else will be so esteemed in God's account; nothing else will pass as genuine metal through the fire of that great testing day which is rapidly approaching. All the thoughts of God centre round Jesus. It is His eternal purpose to exalt and glorify that Name. The whole universe will yet be called upon to find in Jesus its central sun. The beams of His glory shall, ere long, shine forth over the whole creation.

Thus it will be, by and by; and now the Christian is called to anticipate that day, and to make Jesus his one absorbing, commanding object, in all things. If he gives an alms, it is to be in the name of Jesus; if he preaches the gospel for the conversion and gathering of souls, it is to be with his eye fixed directly upon Jesus, and for the glory of His Name. Will this contract the sphere or measure of his benevolence? Will it lessen his interest in the work of evangelization? Quite the reverse; it will greatly enlarge the former, and intensify the latter; and while it does all this, it will elevate the tone of his spirit in the work, and impart stability to all his service, inasmuch as it will ever keep his heart and mind occupied with the very highest object, even Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

I may enter upon a certain line of work, under the influence of excitement, or in imitation of others, or to get a name for myself, from all manner of motives. I may work with an energy and zeal which puts others to shame. I may be greatly looked up to, get a great name among my fellows; be puffed, flattered, and applauded; my name

may appear as a celebrity in all the religious journals of the day, and, after all the Lord may not be able to say, as to a single act of all my service, "You did it unto me."

On the other hand, a man may pursue a path of quiet, unobtrusive, unostentatious service, unknown and unnoticed, and not wishing to be noticed; the stream of his benevolence may flow copiously, unknown to all save those who are refreshed by its influence, and, for the most part, not even by them. The lanes, the alleys, the courtyards, the prisons, the hospitals, are visited; the widow's tear is dried, her sorrow soothed, her wants supplied; the orphan is thought of; the sons and daughters of toil and misery are looked after; the precious tidings of salvation are sounded in many a garret; the gospel tract slipped into many a hand; and all the while, little is heard or known, down here, of the doer of these precious, these most fragrant acts of service and self-sacrifice. But, the odour goes up to the throne—the record is above—it is all engraved on the Master's heart. He remembers it all and will bring it all out in due time, and that, too, after such a fashion that the doer would not recognise his own work.

Who knew what was in Abraham's heart, when he started on that marvellous journey to Moriah—a journey which has only been exceeded in marvellous mystery by that from Gethsemane to Calvary? Who knew what he was going to do? Who would ever have known it, if the Holy Ghost had not recorded it on the eternal page of inspiration? "I and the lad will go yonder and worship."—"They went both of them together."—"Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Abraham was engrossed with God Himself, from first to last. From the moment he rose from his couch on that memorable morning, until he stretched forth his hand to take the knife, his soul was absorbed with the living God. It was this that gave holy elevation to the entire scene. It was done to God.

Thus it is always. Whatever is done to Christ will be remembered and rewarded; whatever is not will sink into

eternal oblivion, or be burnt up in judgment. It is not the quantity but the quality of the work that will be tried and made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ. Look at the parable of the labourers in Matthew xx. What a reasonable lesson does that parable read out to our hearts! The labourers who were first hired, were the only ones with whom an agreement was made; all the rest worked in the confidence that their Master would give them what was right. If any of the first set of labourers had been asked, during the day, "What are you to get as a reward for your work?" They would have said, "A penny." They were working for a penny. But if any of the others had been asked the same question, they would have said, "I don't know; but I am sure the Master will do what is right."

This makes all the difference. The moment I work for reward, it ceases to be christian service. It is not that christian service will not be rewarded: it most assuredly will; but just so far as it is christian service, will it be rendered apart from all thought of reward. "The love of Christ," not the hope of reward, "constraineth us." Why did the wicked and slothful servant hide his talent in the earth? Because he did not know his Lord. Had he known Him, he would have loved Him, and served Him for love's sake, which is the only service that Christ values.

It was, we may rest assured, joy to Abraham's soul to have a son to lay on the altar of God. And so with the true Christian now; it is his joy to be permitted to render any little service to that Lord whom he loves supremely. Nor will it be a question with him as to the kind of service, or the sphere in which it is to be rendered, or the amount of the work; it is enough for him if his Lord can say, "You did it unto me." "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work *upon me*." It does not matter in the least what we are doing, provided only it be done directly to Christ, with the eye fixed

on Him, and the heart filled with Him. It is this that imparts value to every little act of service; and if there be one thing more than another which the heart longs for, it is the ability to do all one's work, of what kind soever it be, with a single eye to Christ.

But ah! the heart is so treacherous and so prone to admit mixed motives. We are apt to attach importance and interest to things because of our connection with them, to engage in service for service' sake, to be more occupied with our work than with the Master. May we have grace ever to remember that all that is not done directly to the Lord Himself is absolutely worthless, however showy it may be in the eyes of man; and, on the other hand, that the smallest thing done in love to Jesus, and in singleness of heart to Him, will never be forgotten.

It would be truly pleasant to the heart to dwell a little longer on this blessed theme; but we must close, and, ere we do so, we would desire to leave with the reader this one solemn question, namely, "*What is your real object?*" We feel the weight of this question, and we look to the Spirit of God to give it weight in the heart and conscience of the reader.

To every one who can say, in calm confidence, and spiritual intelligence, "I am saved," the next grand point is, to be able to say, "Christ is my object—to me to live is Christ." Alas, how few of us can say it! We stop short. We are occupied with our salvation, our peace and blessing, our comfort and liberty; or it may be we are taken up with our service, we get into some machinery of work. In a word, it is not Christ—it is not abiding in Him, feeding on Him, and acting for Him. It is really self, and this is downright misery. We should never rest satisfied with anything short of having Jesus as a covering for our eyes and an object for our hearts. This would, in very deed, be to understand experimentally, the *ground*, the *spirit*, and the *object* of true devotedness.

PHILADELPHIA.

The Substance of a Lecture delivered August 15th, in
Kensington Hall, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.

As it will be expected, beloved friends, from the advertisement announcing this lecture, that I should say something on the present position and prospects of the Church, as taught in Scripture, I have read the epistles to Philadelphia and Laodicea. In the picture here given of Philadelphia, we see the true position of the Church, or assembly, that would be a witness for Christ in the present day. In Laodicea, we see that which follows it, and grows out of it. We could not have had the lukewarmness of *Laodicea* from the deadness of *Sardis*. There must be heat as well as cold to produce lukewarmness.

But before entering on the details of these two epistles, it may be well to take a glance, though rapidly, at the previous five which are associated with them. The number is significant; seven being the perfect number. It is like a complete circle, and may embrace, in the mind of God, the entire period of the Church's responsibility, as a vessel of testimony on the earth. The number seven is often used in this book as signifying *spiritual completeness*; and elsewhere as the symbol of a *complete revolution in time*; such as the seven days of the week, and the seven feasts of Israel.

Many who have examined this portion of Scripture most carefully, have come to the conclusion, that these seven pictures of the state of the Churches which were then in Asia, have also a more enlarged application. They are considered, by such, as a successional picture of the professing Church in general, from the beginning to the end of her history on the earth—that is, from the days of the apostles to the rapture of the saints.

It would appear then, beloved brethren, that there are

three things to be borne in mind, in our meditations on the seven Churches: 1. That these seven Churches were actually existing in Asia, and in the condition here described, in John's day. There were others, we know, there may have been many, but, in the wisdom of God, seven are selected. They are characterized as "the things which are." 2. The moral instruction therein given, is for the guidance and blessing of individual Christians in all ages of the Church. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." 3. That they have an extended application from John's time to the close of the Church's existence on the earth. We never read of the Church, or of churches, as on the earth after the close of the third chapter. This view, you will observe, agrees with the general character of this book, which is *prophetical*. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this *prophecy*."

In these seven epistles, then, we have what may be fairly called, an inspired history of the Church, though prophetically given. But what a charm this gives to Church history, properly so called! We see God's hand and interest in it, and surely everything that interests Him ought to interest us. Besides, in reading about the dear suffering ones in past ages, we are reading about our brothers and sisters who loved the blessed Lord and His word more than their lives. And, on the other hand, what can give us such a true idea of the real spirit of the world, as to see it persecuting and killing unoffending men and women, just because they love the Lord that died for them? But this is what we have to expect from the world, whether it appears in the garb of heathenism, or under the cloak of the christian name and profession. "For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." The blessed Lord Himself found as little sympathy in the Jewish Synagogue as in the hall of Pilate.

When persecution first began for a difference of opinion

on religious subjects, it was more cruel and unrelenting than under the heathen Emperors. We may well blush to acknowledge it, but the sword and the mitre have been most pitiless and desolating. Oh! what is the world! What is Christendom! we may well exclaim. It is a perfect relief to the mind to turn away from both, and read, in the light of holy Scripture, the history of each.

EPHESUS. Falling from first love is the charge against Ephesus. Already the Church had sadly declined; in heart at least. Outwardly they were going on very well. I dare say, had we seen them, we should have thought them most zealous, godly, and devoted. "I know thy works," says the Lord, "and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil." But, alas, the heart was away from Him. And you will observe that He does not say, "works of *faith*, labours of *love*, and patience of *hope*," as in the case of the Thessalonians. The words, "faith, love, hope" are wanting. This makes all the difference. The three christian graces are not in exercise. This was what grieved and disappointed His heart. In His sight, however fair outward appearance might be, Ephesus was fallen. "Remember therefore from whence thou art *fallen*; and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

These sorrowful complaints, beloved brethren, show us how strongly the Lord feels the slipping away of our hearts from Him, even when good works are kept up. But some may be disposed to ask, "What is falling from first love, when good works are maintained?" I believe it is our ceasing to find all our delight in Christ Himself. So long as He has His right place in our hearts, our love can never decline. We all know that love begets love, and that only love in return can satisfy love. If we are dwelling on Christ's love to us, and on His great work

for us, as the manifestation of His love, ours must grow exceedingly. But if we lose the sweet sense and enjoyment of His love, ours soon cools down; but His never does, blessed be His name. It is like the water mark on your river, which remains at the same height whether the tide ebbs or flows. But how soon you can tell from this standard when the water begins to fall. You may see it gradually decline. Oh! beloved brethren, what feelings of distress should such thoughts awaken in our minds! If the river of your love or mine falls a single hair's breadth, His eye sees it—His heart feels it. Were His love to cool down as fast as ours, the difference would not be seen. Oh! what grace and patience to bear with us, and to love us all the same, and never grow weary in seeking to win us back to our first love. Oh! that He might see in us that which would refresh and delight his heart.

Amongst the innumerable evils that flow from the heart slipping away from Christ, the want of spiritual discernment and sound spiritual feelings are most manifest. Evil had crept into the Church. Such a thing should never have been allowed there. The Church ought to have been the power and manifestation of holiness in the midst of evil, but never associated with it. It is described by Paul to his beloved son Timothy, as "the house of God which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Here we are told that the assembly of God is His dwelling place; and the support and display of the truth. Surely, then, beloved brethren, the assembly of God ought to study what suits Him, not themselves—what is due to His character and claims, not their own. You will observe that the Lord speaks in strong terms when He refers to the evil that is in the Church. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which *I also hate.*" Discipline is not the question here, that we have elsewhere; but He tells us in plainest terms, that *He hates evil.* Surely that should be enough for all our hearts.

The Lord enable us by His grace to keep the house clean enough for Him.

We may just notice, in passing, the great difference in the style of the address to the Church of Ephesus in this epistle, and in that on a former occasion by Paul. There, the saints are addressed as "the faithful in Christ Jesus." Here, they are addressed not directly, but through their angel, or representative. A certain distance and reserve are maintained. There, Christ is presented as the Head of the body, ministering nourishment to the members. Here, He is seen in the capacity of a Judge, holding the seven stars in His right hand and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. There, in short, we see the Church in all the fulness of heavenly grace; here, in responsibility on the earth; but, alas! as an unfaithful witness. Nevertheless, *His* love is unchangeable, and His eye sees the faithful few in the midst of a general decline, and meets them in special grace. "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

SMYRNA. The state of the Church in Smyrna, evidently foreshadows the period of her suffering under the Roman Emperors. The Lord permitted her to pass through the furnace, though His love counted and defined the days of her tribulation. He loved her as much then as He did the day He died for her. But His heart was grieved because of her failure, and He suffered her to fall into the hands of the enemy, that she might be brought back to Himself. "Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." Some have thought that the "ten days" refer to *ten* distinct persecutions under Rome Pagan; others, to *ten years* under Diocletian. What a fearful thing it is, beloved brethren, to be allowed to fall into Satan's hands. Oh! that we may be kept so near to the Lord as never to need such

chastening! He suffered this trial to come upon them, that they might *feel* the bitterness of getting away from Him; and, perhaps, to prevent them from going farther.

But observe here, the grace and tenderness of His heart, in the way He comes before them. "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive again." As if He had said, "I have gone through great tribulation for you; fear not to go through it for me—I died for you; be faithful in death for me." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Need we wonder at the quiet firmness and joy of many of the martyrs of Jesus when suffering for Him! The heathen used to be astonished at the way they met death in its most frightful forms. "Death is no punishment to these Christians," they used to say, "for they die singing hymns, and declaring that they are going home to one Jesus, whom they believe to be in heaven."

"Strange conquest, where the Conqueror must die,
And He is slain that wins the victory."

PERGAMOS. In approaching Pergamos, we feel as if the faithfulness and glory of Smyrna had departed. Here Christ presents Himself in an entirely different character to that of Smyrna. "These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges."

The *sword* is the symbol of the word of God. The Church has not only slipped away from the Person of Christ, but she is now drifting away from the authority of His word. The frightful doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes are taught. Hence the Lord says, "Repent: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against *them* with the sword of my mouth."

Surely, beloved brethren, it is not difficult to see, that the state of things in Pergamos shadows forth the alliance of the Church with the State under Constantine. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." Now she has got right into the world and asso-

ciated with the very throne of Satan there. The Christian must ever be in one of two places—either separated from the world and suffering, or associated with it and unfaithful. If we look at this sad change in the light of *worldly advantage* to the Church, we may call it a happy change; but if we look at it in the light of *spiritual loss*, we shall pronounce it as the most sorrowful day in her entire history. Does not the apostle say of Christians, “I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ?” And now what has she done? She has listened to the flatteries of the world—accepted its offers, and placed herself under its patronage. Yes; she who was in the days of her youth affianced to the Prince of heaven, has yielded to the seductions of the prince of this world. Many good men, I know, have written and spoken of Constantine, as if he had been the saviour of the Church; I take an entirely different view of the unhallowed union, and believe it was the day of her deepest fall, and deepest degradation. I would rather, a thousand times, see her dwelling in the catacombs, than in the emperor’s palace. But persecution by the world seems not to have answered the end which Satan had in view, and he thought he would try something else.

Under the spirit of persecution from without, the saints of God seem to have increased in numbers, spirituality, and unworldliness. Besides the immense numbers who suffered at the stake, modern industry has discovered something like seventy thousand epitaphs in the catacombs. There, the followers of Jesus, of all ranks, were content to live, die, and be buried, rather than conform to the ways of the world. But seduction has always been more fatal to the Church than persecution. She has been more blessed through her martyrs than her doctors. Still, there were those even in Pergamos who could not go with the multitude; and rich and sweet are His promises to them. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the

stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." The *manna* may represent the lowly Jesus on earth—the *hidden manna*, the exalted Christ in the holiest of all; and the *white stone* and the *new name*, the secret link of personal communion, and of His entire approbation.

THYATIRA. It is not difficult, I think, beloved friends, to see, what are called "the middle ages," in the dark picture here given of Thyatira. Those who have read the history of these dark ages, will be at no loss to trace the likeness; especially from the eighth to the thirteenth century; and down to the dawn of the Reformation. The temporal dominion of the papacy dates from the eighth century. What centuries these were, for wickedness of every kind! That which was allowed and openly practised in the professing Church, is unfit to be named in a public lecture, or be transferred to the pages of a christian magazine. "Thou *sufferest* that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Corruption, idolatry, and persecution characterize these dark ages. But you may always rest assured, that wherever you find Balaam, Jezebel is not far off. The prophet and the prophetess go together. He seduces the people of God to join with the world, but she is the mother of children like herself. She nurses in the bosom of the Church, its vilest and most deadly foes. But the Lord hath said of such, "I will kill her children with death." This judgment shall be fully executed when Christ smites the nations with a rod of iron. But dark as that period is, He sees all that is going on. "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire; and his feet are like unto fine brass."

What we find in Thyatira, is but the natural consequence of the unholy alliance of Pergamos. The only true place of the Church in this world is separation from it—

the witness of its ruin, and of the love that gave an only-begotten Son to be the Saviour of the world. When she gives up this place she gives up everything as God's witness on the earth. Let us never forget, beloved brethren, that our testimony should be according to the life we possess—the holiness we are partakers of, and the grace in which we stand.

But as it was when Jezebel sat queen in Israel, so it is here. The Lord has many in Thyatira who have not bowed the knee to Baal. In this Church, the remnant is distinctly marked from the great body of mere professors. And here, too, we have set before the overcomers as their blessed hope, the coming of the Lord—dominion over the nations; and as a present, realized joy, “the Morning Star.” “But unto you I say, and unto the rest (the remnant) in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. 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. And I will give him the morning star.”

SARDIS. The difference between Sardis and Thyatira is most manifest. No one can fail to see that a great change has taken place. Balaam and Jezebel, those standing types of corruption and violence, are no longer before us. The condition of the professing Church in Protestant countries after the Reformation, answers to Sardis. Outwardly, everything is greatly improved, the idolatry, assumption, and persecution of the Church of Rome have disappeared. Still, the state of Sardis is a deeply solemn one. “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” Could anything be more solemn than this? “Thou hast a name that thou

livest, and art dead." Christians, of course, are not dead. But the system they are in has no vitality. This is what some have called the *visible* and the *invisible* Church; or the living ones in a system of dead formalism. True, the energy of evil has departed, but spiritual death has taken its place—an orthodox creed, and a cold, lifeless formalism. It is truly awful to think of such a state of things, and that we are in the midst of it.

But the character in which the Lord presents Himself to Sardis, not only reveals its state, but cheers and encourages our hearts. "These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." The seven-fold fulness of spiritual life, and power are with Him. We must look to Christ, and to Him alone. The fulness of inward light and outward power remain with Him. For centuries before the Reformation, the Church ruled the world: after, the world was allowed to rule the Church; but some, not satisfied with either, said, the Church should rule itself, and be the depository of all needed gifts and supplies. But in none of these has Christ His right place, therefore all are wrong. The seven spirits of God, and the seven stars are still with Him. He has not given any of them up. Even Timothy was instructed to commit *truth*, not *power*, to faithful men; that always remains with Christ the Head in heaven. Hence we find that in His address to this Church, He calls them back to His truth and grace. "Remember therefore how thou hast *received* and *heard*; and hold fast and repent." Remember whose *word* thou hast heard—whose *grace* thou hast received. Hold fast truth and grace, and repent of thy formalism.

The faithful remnant is here spoken of as "a few names." The Lord knows them by name. They have not defiled their garments with worldliness; and they shall walk with Christ in white; and their names shall be publicly confessed before His Father and His angels. Who would not like to be an overcomer amidst the deadness of Sardis!

PHILADELPHIA. The Reformation was a great and blessed work of God's Spirit; but the blessing was more individual than corporate. The great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith *alone*, was the means of delivering many souls—glory be to God—His name have all the praise. But many of the leaders of that blessed work, dear men of God though they were, and ever worthy of all honour, fell into the mistake of connecting the work of God's Spirit with human governments. The result was, that the professing Church soon sank into a worldly, dead state. This is evident, not only from all history, but from the word of God. "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch," says Christ to Sardis, "I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come upon thee." This is the way the Lord will come upon the world, and take it by surprise. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. v. 2, 3.) If the professing Church *will* associate itself with the world, it must share the world's doom.

In Philadelphia, we have the picture of a *fresh work of God's Spirit*, since the Reformation; and which, I believe, applies to the present time. In the presence of a great professing body, a feeble few are faithful to Christ and to His word. This makes the epistle to Philadelphia exceedingly interesting. At the same time, all the previous states of the Church, may be also applicable in modern times, to the Church in general. Declension from first love, as in Ephesus, alas, alas, is but too manifest everywhere. Persecution from without, as in Smyrna, may still be felt by faithful ones. The seductions of Balaam, and prophesying for gain, as in Pergamos, still go on. The tyranny and corruptions of Jezebel, as in Thyatira, may be bitterly experienced to day, in certain quarters; and the deadness of Sardis, we must confess, prevails on every side.

(The remainder to follow, D. V., next month.)

THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD.

COMMIT thou all thy ways, and all thy grief and care
To Him whom heaven obeys, whose love is everywhere—
For air, and clouds, and wind, He findeth pathways meet,
Shall He not also find the pathway for thy feet ?

Thy trust must be in Him, if thou wouldst be at peace ;
If *His* work is thy theme, thy work shall have success.
With labour of thine own, with sorrowing and with care,
No blessing can be won ; God giveth all to prayer.

Ways through all dark distress, all means to thee are known ;
Thou workest but to bless, thy path is light alone ;
And none can stay thine arm, nor bid thy work be still,
When thou wilt save from harm thy people Israel.

Trust, O thou sorrowing heart, hope on, be not afraid ;
God sees thee where thou art, in darkness and in dread.
And He will lead thee on—trust God to lead thee right ;
Thou yet shall see the sun arise in glorious light.

In His great strength arise, cast all thy cares away ;
Leave fears, and grief, and sighs, to such as cannot pray.
If *thou* art not a king, almighty to compel,
Thy God rules everything—and He can rule them well.

Him do thou ever trust—the King who rules aright—
His ways are wise and just, though hidden from thy sight.
How wilt thou wonder soon, when past are fears and doubt,
Thy darkness turned to noon, His purposes worked out.

And though His comfort stay, His help be slowly wrought,
As though He turned away, as though He loved thee not ;
And though thou sink awhile, in darkness and in pain,
As if He would not smile, nor show thee light again.

He will not always chide, but when thy hope seems least,
If still thy faith abide, then shalt thou be released :
When once thy trust is proved, the grief that harmed thee not,
Shall wholly be removed, thy full deliverance wrought.

Will God forsake His own ? His own, His child, art thou ;
The glory and the crown, by faith are given thee now.
And God shall set the palm within thy hand at last ;
How sweet shall be thy psalm, when all thy grief is past !

Act, word, and thought shall praise the Lord, who goes before,
To guide us in our ways—our Shepherd evermore.
O keep us, faithful God, still faithful to thy love,
So earth's dark rugged road shall lead to heaven above.

AN EARNEST APPEAL.

DEAR READER,

WE desire, in this our closing number for the year, to address you in a few plain and pointed words. We deeply feel the solemnity of the present moment; and we are impressed with the necessity of dealing faithfully with the souls of our readers. We believe we have, as the conductors of this magazine, a sacred duty to perform—a duty to God—a duty to souls. We do honestly desire to be used of the Lord to do real, soul-work, and hence it is that we now devote a page or two simply to the object of making a direct appeal to the conscience of the reader.

And, first, we would ask you a very pointed question: Are you saved? Have you a hold of Christ as *your* Saviour? Do you *know* yourself as in Christ? We do not ask you if you wish to be saved, or hope to be saved. There are few who would not say, "Yes," to such an enquiry. But our question is, Do you know yourself as one saved by grace, washed in the blood, justified in a risen Christ, and standing in the full favour of God? Have you peace with God, through Jesus Christ? Do not be satisfied with anything short of a clear and settled knowledge of these things in your own soul. Do not put the question aside. Meet it now. You may not live till to-morrow. God declares that "*Now* is the accepted time, and *now* is the day of salvation." God only speaks to you of salvation "to-day." If you wait till to-morrow, He may have to speak to you of death and judgment. Have you ever felt the burden of sin? Do you now feel it? Do you realize, in any measure, your true condition, as a lost, ruined, hell-deserving sinner? Do you know that you have been found out, convicted, and condemned?

Thus it is. You are not now under probation or trial, as many suppose. Man was once under trial—God tried him in every way. He tried him in the garden of Eden;

and what was the result? Man listened to the devil, and believed his lie. He tried him without law; and what was the result? Man was lawless, violent, and corrupt. He tried him under government after the flood; and what was the result? Idolatry. He tried him under law; and what was the result? Transgression, offence, wrath. He tried him by the ministry of the prophets; and what was the result? The prophets were rejected and stoned. He sent His Son, in love and grace, and patient goodness; and what was the result? Man hated Him, cast Him out, and preferred a robber and a murderer to the holy, gracious, loving Jesus.

But, further, there is another link in the marvellous chain. No sooner had the rejected Jesus taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, than down came the Holy Ghost—for what? In judgment? Nay; but in patient grace and powerful testimony; what was the result? “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” The stoning of Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost, was the crowning proof of man’s total depravity and hopeless ruin.

Hence, dear fellow-sinner, you are not under trial. You have been tried, and found guilty. You are under sentence; and in this condition, God sends you a message of free pardon and full salvation. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses.” Precious word! Hear it, we beseech thee, hear it and live—hear it, and enter into divine peace, in the consciousness that your many *sins* are blotted out, and *sin*, the root of all, fully and for ever condemned, so that God no longer sees you in your sins, but in a risen Christ.

It is of all importance for the reader to see the entire chain of evidence as to man’s guilt, bearing down upon himself as an individual—to see that not only has he committed sins peculiar to himself, and with which he himself is chargeable before God; but that also all that is

true of *man* as such—all that is true of the race and of the nature of man, is true of him—that his condition is one of guilt, and such guilt as stops not short of the absolute hatred, rejection, and crucifixion of the Son of God. This is man's guilt, and with this the reader stands charged, according to the just judgment of God, unless, as a repentant, conscience-smitten sinner, he has fled for refuge to the blood of Jesus. Thus it stands, at this moment, with the reader. He is either purged by the blood that was shed, or stained with the guilt of shedding it. There is positively no middle ground.

Oh! reader, do think of this! Say, are you stained or purged—which? If, as a convicted sinner, you have come to Jesus, then is your entire standing altered. You are no longer viewed as standing in nature's guilt, but in divine righteousness. You have passed from death to life, from guilt to righteousness, from wrath to favour. You are no longer viewed as in the first Adam, but in the Second. In a word. Your deliverance is complete. You can never come into judgment. There is nothing to judge. The same authority that declares there is judgment coming, declares there is no judgment for you, nor can be, since Jesus was judged in your stead. All that was due to you—to your works, your ways, your nature, Jesus bore on the cross, and you stand accepted in Him, and never can be seen in any other way.

Such is your standing before God. Amazing truth! May the Holy Ghost enable you to enter into the knowledge and experience of it! There can be no intelligent or happy service rendered until your soul is divinely settled down in this glorious truth. You may be anxious, you may be sincere, you may be earnest; but a happy, intelligent, devoted Christian you cannot be, until you know, in the secret of your own soul, that you are eternally accepted in the Beloved. All affections flow out of relationship—all duties flow from position. If you are not a father, you cannot have the affections of a father. If you

are not in an office, you cannot fulfil the duties of that office. Nothing can be simpler. We may fail in affections and duties ; alas ! we do ; but then the relationship or the office is a positive thing, and divine relationship can never be broken, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

Beloved friend, will you allow us to urge upon you, solemnly and faithfully, the consideration of this grand and all-important question which we have laid before you. Do not put it aside. Your immortal soul, your eternal interests, are at stake. Time is rapidly passing away. Every breath you draw is bringing you nearer and nearer to a boundless eternity. You must meet God. You must live for ever. You must, ere long, be summoned away from this world ; and if you die in your sins you must spend a never-ending eternity in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, in blackness of darkness, in misery and woe unutterable. Oh ! do be warned, we beseech you, ere it be too late, and you find yourself in that place where hope can never come. May God's Spirit open your eyes and give you to see your guilt and danger, that so you may have no rest until you find it in a crucified and risen Lord.

And now one word to the Christian reader. Dearly beloved in the Lord, to you we could say much, did space permit. We could speak to you of the awful solemnity of the times in which our lot is cast—the appalling spread of infidelity and superstition—the worldliness and carnal indifference, the unsubduedness and self-indulgence, of professing Christians—the terrible looseness in morals, arising, in many cases, from an open abuse of the principles and doctrines of grace—the want of reality amongst us—the strife, discord, division, and confusion in our midst—in a word, the rapid progress of men and things down, down to eternal perdition—the doctrines and doings of devils at our very doors—drawing-room companies entertained by wicked spirits contradicting and blaspheming the word of God.

All this and much more that might be named should assuredly solemnize the heart, and lead to holy vigilance, earnestness, and reality. We do not want to terrify the reader. Quite the reverse. We want him to possess a clear understanding of the times, and to be on his watch-tower, looking out for the Morning Star. We believe that calm confidence and joyous hope should characterize the Christian's inward state; and as to his practical bearing, his course, and conduct, he should be marked by a deep and earnest *sense of things*, and, withal, a downright reality. God grant these things to all His people!



PHILADELPHIA.

(Continued from page 219.)

THE first thing, beloved brethren, to be carefully noted in meditating on the epistle to Philadelphia, is the character in which Christ presents Himself. This is the key to our understanding it. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true." Everything in the assembly of God should answer to this standard. This is what we find in Philadelphia. We are all too prone to be content with what suits ourselves, and to shrink from the pain and trouble of discipline. Whereas, we ought to think only of what is due to the character of Christ. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true." Holiness and truth should be the great pillars of the Church's practice. Is it holy—is it true? should be our constant enquiry. The Spirit of God, who abides with the Church for ever, is called both the *Holy Spirit*, and the Spirit of *truth*; and this agrees with the whole analogy of Scripture, as we saw in a previous lecture. You will remember when we were speaking on the peace offering, which typifies the communion of saints, that it was provided by a statute for ever, that only the children of the priest that were clean should eat of the sacrifice. "Every one that is clean in

thy house shall eat of it." And, again, as the Psalmist says, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." Whatever *we* may say or do, this is the unchanged and unchangeable characteristic of the dwelling place of God. Oh! that the beauties of holiness may ever shine brightly in this corner of His temple!

But not only does Christ reveal Himself in His personal glory to these faithful ones, but also in His divine power and authority. "These things saith he that..... hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." He thus suits Himself to their condition and need. How blessed it is, beloved brethren, thus to know the Lord in His moral glory and almighty power. It draws out the heart to Him in truest worship. He has the key of David, according to the ancient prophecy. "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." (Isa. xxii. 22) Thus all the treasures—all the resources of the royal house of David, are under His hand, and at His disposal. May we ever be kept close to Him who has the key!

How sweetly all this reminds us of His own lowly path of love, when it was said, "To him the porter openeth." The enemy sought to shut Him out everywhere—from the great *inn* of this world to the end of His path, when He suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem. But God opened the door to Him, and He found His way to the poor, and the most hidden, of the flock. What can be more blessed than to have Him for our pattern in our pilgrim path! May we think more of this, and seek to be more conformed to Him!

"I know thy works," He says, but He does not say what they are. Enough for our hearts that He knows all about us. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it. For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

What quietness of mind this truth should give to those who go about preaching His word. "Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." A key is the symbol of power and authority. There is no good in running before the one who has the key; to go in or out, we must wait until He come. The blessed Lord presents Himself to His dear Philadelphians in this character of power and authority, because of their weakness. "For thou hast a little strength." They had no *outward* power, like Sardis; but they did not need it, when He was so near them with the key. What a beautiful combination we have here! "For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

These three things, beloved friends, open a wide and rich field for contemplation; but at present, we can only draw your attention to them. He who would know the mind of the Lord as to His assembly, should examine them carefully. The Philadelphians were without influence, or note, or power in the world; but they had what is far, far better. They were in fellowship with Him who carries the key that opens every door of service and every treasure of blessing. And they kept close to His word, and did not deny His name. The *word* of the Lord is our only security and authority at all times, but especially in an evil time; and the *name* of the Lord is our only true centre of gathering, bond of union, and power in worship and discipline; and the Holy Spirit, present with us, is our only *strength* in the midst of such outward weakness. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

But that which gives a peculiar charm to the position of the saints in Philadelphia, is, that they are like what Christ was Himself when here on earth. He never had influence or power in this world, but He could say, "Thy law is within my heart," and His first care was the glory of His Father's name. And what, we would ask, in all Christendom, could please the heart of Christ, like seeing

the reflection of Himself, as the rejected Man, in His people? Nothing; no, nothing! Would to God it were more true, and more manifest. His experience in that mysterious path of love will be remembered with praise and thanksgiving for ever. He will never grow weary of singing with His saints in heaven, the song of His lonely sorrow on earth. "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard." Oh! with what rapture this song will be sung in heaven when Christ in Person leads it! The thought of it makes us long for that day of glory. But till then, may we be found walking in His steps, and not ashamed of His rejection.

As Christ Himself was despised, and never understood when in this world, so a remnant (as are all true Philadelphians), must expect to be despised. It was so of old when those who returned from the captivity were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. "Even that which they build," said Tobiah, "if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." But Jehovah was a wall of fire around His feeble remnant, and they had nothing to fear from their enemies.

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." This is a remarkable word, beloved brethren; but the Lord hath spoken it. The haughty formalists of Sardis shall yet bow in homage at the feet of the now-despised Philadelphian, and confess that he is loved and honoured by the Lord.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon all the earth." Many good men have said, that the Church shall pass through the great tribulation. But, if I rightly understand this verse, Christ says, No. He does not say, "I also will keep thee when thou passest through

it"—but, "I also will keep thee *from it*." He will take her up to be with Himself in heavenly glory. The rapture of the saints will take place before that dreadful hour. Why honest and diligent students of Scripture should have made such a mistake, is hard to say; unless it be that they do not see the distinction which Scripture makes between the Jewish remnant and the Church of God. If such think that our Lord is speaking about the Church in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, then the mistake could be accounted for, though we might wonder how any one could discover the Church there. At all events, He says plainly enough to the Church here, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Nothing, we think, could be more distinct or conclusive. He does not even say, "I will keep thee from the *temptation*; but from the "*hour*"—the time—the period, when it shall prevail in its many forms. And the word "*temptation*" being used here, may include the time of the "strong delusion," which we believe shall immediately precede, what may be called more strictly, the *great tribulation*. In Matthew xxiv. it is spoken of as a tribulation without parallel and as in connection with the Jews. Again, in Revelation vii., there is the "great tribulation" in connection with the Gentiles. But in the passage before us, the language is wider far. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come on *all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth*." It seems to me, beloved brethren, that the heart must be perverse indeed, that refuses to receive such plain statements—such thoughtful, tender, loving promises. The Lord, I have no doubt, will maintain the testimony of Philadelphia, as to Himself, down to the eve of that awful time; but from the delusions and seductions, as well as persecutions of all kinds, in a word, from the hour of temptation "which shall come upon all the world," He will keep the Bride of His love. Blessed be His great and holy Name! May we

firmly believe, and hold fast by *His* word, whatever men may say.

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. He threatens to come on Sardis as a thief—He comes to Philadelphia with a crown. And He comes with it Himself. ‘I will keep thee.’ “*I*”—“*thee*.” The coming of our Lord in grace to take us to Himself, before the hour of temptation, is the true hope and crown of the Church which is His body and bride.

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.” Those who have taken the place of *weakness* here, but of holy firmness against evil, shall be made *pillars* there. And because they denied not His *name* here, He will write His own *new* name upon them there. The scene which He here opens up to the overcomers is *glory*—the New Jerusalem—that which will follow His coming for them. And, oh! you with pencil in hand may doubly underline that precious little word, “*MY*”—that blessed connecting link. “My word,” “My name,” “My patience,” “My God,” and “My new name.” Who would not desire above all earthly honours, privileges, or advantages, to be in the position of the Philadelphians and waiting for the Lord from heaven!

LAODICEA. The lateness of the hour, beloved brethren, will not allow me to say much on the state of things in Laodicea. But important as it is in its own place, I confess to a willingness to be brief. The eye, naturally, turns away from a picture so painful, after dwelling so long on one so beautiful. The Lord does not appear before us here as in Philadelphia. There, it was Himself in the beauties and attractions of His Person morally, and with the key of

power waiting to serve them. Here, He presents Himself as "The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." This sounds like the doom of Christendom: her end—her awful end—has come! Where the light has been greatest, the judgment will be heaviest. He comes Himself, as the faithful witness, to take her place. *She* has completely failed, and long been unfaithful, but *He* will verify the whole truth of God, and take the place that is His in the new creation.

Indifference to truth, *latitudinarianism*, was the sin of Laodicea—is the sin of the "last days." It is nauseous to Christ, and will bring His final judgment on the professing Church. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." These are strange words for the lips of Jesus, and strong words for Him to use about that which still calls itself by His name. But indifference to truth, after it has been known, is unbearable to Him. They are not ignorant. There is heat and cold—truth and error, in Laodicean lukewarmness. They profess to be rich in truth and in all spiritual things. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." There may be a measure of zeal for spiritual things—a certain warmth and ardour for such things as the circulation of the Scriptures, missions, and the like; and also a certain measure of truth known, such as the Philadelphians teach and practise, and which is so far liked; but when they see where the truth will lead to, if faithfully carried out, they hesitate, draw back, sink into a cold indifference, and become *lukewarm*. "Thou art neither cold nor hot." Christ can endure it no longer. Christendom must be cast out. But He cannot cast out any that have come to Him, and still in grace He lingers. The door is open for repentance.

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest

be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." The righteousness of God, and the practical righteousness of saints, are both unknown, notwithstanding their great pretensions. And what fills up the dark picture—while they think and speak as if they had the light of God, they are blind. But still His love lingers about the door. Alas! He is outside. But while a sheep or a lamb is inside, the Shepherd waits outside. He will not go away and leave them there.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne." What a fearful state things must have come to! Christ outside the door of His own house! But He perseveres, blessed be His name, though His head be filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night! He knocks again; the slumbering one awakes; the knock is heard; the door is opened; the sheep know His voice; He gathers them out; they are caught up to His throne! And now, the corrupt mass of Christendom is spued out of His mouth. The awful judgments of the earth immediately follow. The day of Jacob's trouble has come. But the Church, the Bride, is with her Lord.

A door is open in heaven: even now we can look in and see, in vision, the elders around the throne. Thunderings, lightnings, and voices proceed from where they are, but they are in a state of perfect, blessed repose. We see them crowned, enthroned, worshipping. But not a seal is yet opened, not a trumpet blown, not a vial poured out. The proper action of the book, strictly speaking, begins with the sixth chapter.

May the Lord enable us, beloved brethren, to keep the word of His patience, and to hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown.

THE MORAL GLORY OF JESUS.

AN EXTRACT.

ZACCHEUS had been but a sinner, a child of nature, which is, as we know, corrupt in its springs and in its activities. But he had been just at that moment under the drawings of the Father, and his soul was making Jesus its object. He wished to see Him, and that desire being commanding, he had pressed his way through the crowd, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, if he might but just see Him as He passed by. The Lord looked up and at once invited Himself into his house. This is very peculiar. Jesus is an uninvited, self-invited guest in the house of that publican at Jericho.

The earliest strivings of life in a poor sinner, the desire which had been awakened by the drawings of the Father, were there in that house ready to welcome Him; but sweetly and significantly He anticipates the welcome, and goes in—goes in in full, consistent, responsive character, to kindle and strengthen the freshly quickened life, till it break forth in some of its precious virtue, and yield some of its own good fruit. “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.” At Emmaus, *desire* had been again quickened, but under different conditions. It was not the desire of a freshly drawn soul, but of restored saints. These two disciples had been unbelieving. They were returning home under a sorrow that Jesus had disappointed them. The Lord rebukes them shortly after He joined them on the road, but so orders His words as to kindle their hearts. When their walk together ends at the gate of their dwelling, the Lord makes as though He would go further. He would not invite Himself, as He had done at Jericho. They were not in the moral state which suggested this, as Zaccheus had been; but, when invited, He goes in—goes in just to kindle further the desire which had now invited Him—to gratify it to the full. And so He does; and they are constrained by their joy to return to the city that night, late as it was, to communicate it to their fellows.

How full of various beauty all these cases are! The guest in the house of Pharisees, the guest in the house of publicans, the guest in the house of disciples—the invited

and the uninvited guest, in the person of Jesus, sits in His place, in all perfection and beauty. I might instance Him as a guest at other tables; but I will now look only at one more. At Bethany we see Him adopting a family scene. Had Jesus disallowed the idea of a christian family, He could not have been at Bethany, as we see He was. And yet, when we get Him there, it is only some new phase of moral beauty that we trace in Him. He is a friend of the family, finding, as we find to this day among ourselves, a home in the midst of them. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus," are words which bespeak this. His love to them was not that of a Saviour, or a shepherd, though we know well He was each of these to them. It was the love of a family friend. But though a friend, an intimate friend, who might, whenever He pleased, find a welcome there; yet He did not interfere with the arrangements of the house. Martha was the housekeeper, the busy one of the family, useful and important in her place; and Jesus will surely leave her where He finds her. It was not for Him to alter or settle such matters. Lazarus may sit by the side of the guests at the family table. Mary may be abstracted and withdrawn as in her own kingdom, or into the kingdom of God within her, and Martha be busy and serving. Be it so. Jesus leaves all this just as He finds it. He who would not enter the house of another unbidden, when entered into the house of these sisters and their brother, will not meddle with its order and arrangements, and in full moral comeliness this is. But if one of the family, instead of carrying herself in her family place, step out of it to be a teacher in His presence, He must and will then resume His higher character, and set things right *divinely*, though He would not interfere with them or touch them *domestically*. Lnke x.

What various and exquisite beauty! Who can track all His paths! The vulture will have to say, it is beyond even the reach of his eye. And if no human eye can fully scan the whole of this One Object, where is the human character that does not aid in setting off its light by its own shadows and imperfections? . . . "I know no one," says another, "so kind, so condescending, who is come down to poor sinners, as He. I trust His love more than I do Mary's, or any saint's; not merely His power as God, but the tenderness of His heart as man. No one ever shewed such, or had such, or proved it so well—none has

inspired me with such confidence. Let others go to saints or to angels, if they will ; I trust Jesus' kindness more." But further : there are in Him combinations of characters, as well as of virtues or graces. His relationship to the world, when He was here, exhibits this. He was at once a Conqueror, a Sufferer, and a Benefactor. What moral glories shine in such an assemblage ! He overcame the world, refusing all its attractions and offers ; He suffered from it, witnessing for God against its whole course and spirit ; He blessed it, dispensing His love and power continually, returning good for evil. Its temptations only made Him a conqueror ; its pollutions and enmities only a Sufferer ; its miseries only a Benefactor. What a combination ! What moral glories shine in each other's company there !



“LORD JESUS, COME.”

 LORD Jesus, come,
And take thy rightful place
As Son of Man, thou risen One !
Come, Lord of all, to reign alone !
 Come, Jesus, come !

 Lord Jesus, come !
The Man of sorrows once—
The Man of patience waiting now—
The Man of joy for ever thou,
 Come, Saviour, come !

 Lord Jesus, come !
Crowned with thy many crowns,
The Crucified, the Lamb once slain,
To wash away sin's crimson stain,
 Come, Jesus, come !

 Lord Jesus, come,
And take thy Father's gift ;
The people by thy cross made thine,
The trophy of thy *love divine*,
 Come, Jesus, come !

THINGS NEW AND OLD.

Lord Jesus, come,
That lost in thee our souls
May bow and worship and adore,
In thy dear presence evermore!
Come, Jesus, come!

Lord Jesus, come,
And let thy glory shine,
That quickly these changed bodies may
Each one reflect a living ray,
Come, Jesus, come!

Lord Jesus, come!
Let every knee bow down,
And every tongue to thee confess,
The Lord of all come forth to bless,
Come, Jesus, come!

The Spirit and the Bride
And him that hears, say, "Come."
Yea, Lord, thy word from that bright home
Is, "Surely I will quickly come."
E'en so, Lord, come!

