

THE
REMEMBRANCER

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

FOR

THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them. Yea, . . . I think it meet, . . . to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.”

2nd Peter i. 12, 13.

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INDEX.

	PAGE
A Little Inquiry,	98
Alliances and Confederations,	7
“Concerning the Collection for the Saints . . . upon the First Day of the Week. (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.) . . .	175
Fragments, 80, 140,	200
Frankincense. (Lev. ii. 2.)	95
From Blindness and Beggary to Worship. (John ix.)	41
German Rationalists and the Bible,	199
Growth through the Truth. (1 Pet. ii. 1-6.)	209
Humility,	220
Jesus, Thou alone art Worthy. (John iii. 25-36.)	92
Nothing but Christ,	135
Philippians iii.,	110
The Heart of Abram. (Gen. xi. 27 ; xii. 1-7.)	161
The Education of the Soul in the Truth. (Luke vii. 37, 38, 48-50 ; John xii. 1-3, xx. 1-17.)	101
The Hope of His Calling. (Eph. i. 15—ii. 10.)	222
The Inspiration of the Scriptures, Especially in Con- nection with the Human Element Therein,	181
The Kingdom of Heaven,	99
The Knowledge of God and Fellowship with Christ. (Sequel to “Alliances and Confederations.”)	21
“The Light of the Body is the Eye.” (Luke xi. 34-35.)	130
The Middle Wall Broken Down. (Jobn iv.)	203
The Mind of Christ. (1 Cor. ii.)	97
The New Creation. (2 Cor. v. 13-21.)	121
The Offerings of God. (Heb. xiii. 15-16.)	54
The Path and Character of the Christian. (1 Pet. i. 1-7.)	225

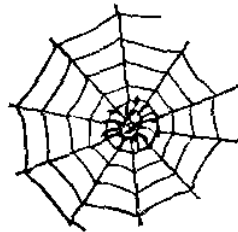
iv.

INDEX.

	PAGE
The Purpose of God. (Eph. i. 9, 10.)	141
The Two Disciples going to Emmaus. (Luke xxiv.)	82
The Way of a Christian's Power. (2 Cor. xii.)	61
"To Me to Live is Christ,"	137
Unfaithfulness and Faithfulness,	90
Waiting for the Son from Heaven. (1 Thes. i. 10.)	2
Worship in Spirit and in Truth,	53

POETRY.

"And having Done All, to Stand,"	161
Communings by the Wayside (Luke xxiv. 15; Mal. iii. 16),	81
Jesus at the Well of Samaria (John iv.),	201
The Christian Mariner,	221
The Last Watch of the Night (Rev. xix. 7),	236
The Times of Refreshing (Rom. viii. 19-23),	1
Verses,	47, 208



The Remembrancer.

“THE TIMES OF REFRESHING.” *

ROM. VIII. 19-23.

“O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplished bliss!”—COWPER’S TASK.

O what a bright and blessed world
This groaning earth of ours will be,
When from its throne the tempter hurl’d,
Shall leave it all, O Lord, to Thee !

But brighter far that world above,
Where we, as we are known shall know ;
And, in the sweet embrace of love,
Reign o’er this ransom’d earth below.

O blessed Lord ; with weeping eyes,
That blissful hour we wait to see ;
While every worm or leaf that dies
Tells of the curse and calls for Thee.

Come, Saviour, then, o’er all below
Shine brightly from Thy throne above ;
Bid heaven and earth Thy glory know,
And all creation feel Thy love.

* “And he called his name NOAH (Rest) saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of *the ground* which the Lord hath cursed.” —Gen. v. 29. These words of Lamech, the father of Noah, prophetically point to Him whom we now know as the true rest of His people, through whom alone, in the end, the curse will pass away from the earth, and the blessings set forth in the above lines will be given.

WAITING FOR THE SON FROM HEAVEN.

I THESS. i. 10.

In the calculations of men events unfold themselves as the effects of causes which are known to be operating. But, while this has its truth, to faith it is God who, in His supremacy, holds a seal in His hand to *stamp each day with its character or sign.*

This gives the soul a fresh interest in the passing moments. Some of them may be more impressively stamped than others; but all are in progress, and each hour is contributing to the unfolding of the coming era, like the seasons of the year, or the advances of day and night. Some moments in such progress may be more strongly marked than others. But all are in advance. Every stage of Israel's journey through the desert was bringing them nearer to Canaan, though some stages were tame and ordinary while others were full of incident. And so all the present age is accomplishing the advance of the promised kingdom, though some periods of it have greater importance than others.

These "signs of the times," or sealings of God's hand upon the passing hour, it is the duty of faith to discern, because they are always according to the premonitions of Scripture. Indeed, current events are only "signs," as they are according to, or in fulfilment of, such previous notices.

The words of the prophets made the doings of Jesus in the days of His flesh the signs of those days (Matt. xii. 22, 23). And have we not words in the New Testament which, in like manner make all around us at this moment, or in every century of the dispensation, significant? Have not words, which we find there, abundantly forecast the characters of such dispensation and given beforehand the forms of those corruptions that were to work in Christendom? They have told us what now our eyes have seen. They told us of the field of wheat and tares; of the mustard seed which became a lodging-place for the fowl of the air; of "the unmerciful servant;" of the Gentile not "continuing in God's goodness;" or of a "great house," with its vessels unto honour and dishonour; and of other like things. They told us of "the latter times," and of "the last days;" and they still tell the deadly character which the hour is to bear that is to usher forth "the man of sin," and ripen iniquity for the manifestation and power of the day of the Lord.

All this is so. And let me ask, if every hour be after this manner bearing its character, or wearing its sign, *what mark are we individually helping to put upon this our day?* Is the purpose and way of the Lord ripening into blessedness at all reflected in us? Or are we, in any measure, aiding to unfold that form of evil which is to bring down the judgment? If the times were to be known and described according to our way, what

character would they bear? What sign would distinguish them?

These are inquiries for the conscience of each of us. We cannot be neuter in this matter. We cannot be idle in this market-place. It may be but in comparative feebleness; but still each of us, within the range of the action of Christendom, is either helping to disclose God's way, or to ripen the vine of the earth for the wine-press of wrath.

The Lord tells us that the sign on which our *faith* must rest is that of a *humbled* Christ, such a sign as that of Jonah the prophet. Our faith deals with such a sign, because our need as sinners casts us on a Saviour or a humbled Christ. But hope may feed on a thousand signs. Our expectations are nourished by a sight of the operations of the divine hand displaying every hour the ripening of the counsels and promises, in spite of the world, and in the very face of increasing human energies.

These signs may be watched, but watched by the saint *already in the place and attitude assigned him by the Spirit.* They are not to determine what is his place, but they may exercise him in it. His place and attitude is beforehand and independently determined for him—*waiting for the Son of God from heaven.*

This posture the Thessalonian saints assumed on their believing the gospel (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). The Apostle seems afterwards to strengthen them in that posture, by telling them that from it they were

to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17). And again afterwards he seems to guard them against being disturbed in that attitude, against being tempted to give it up, by further telling them, that that place of *expectation* should be exchanged for the place of *meeting* ere the day of the Lord fell with its terrors on the world and the wicked (2 Thess. i., ii.). And, still further, this very posture of waiting for the Son from heaven had induced a certain evil. Some among the Thessalonian saints were neglecting present handiworks. The Apostle does not in any wise seek to change their posture, but admonishes them to hold it in company with diligence and watchfulness, that, while their eye was gazing, their hand might be working (2 Thess. iii.)

Other New Testament Scriptures seem also to assume the fact, that faith had given all the saints this same attitude of soul; or, that the things taught them were fitted to do so (see 1 Cor. i. 7; xv. 23, 51, 52; Phil. iii. 20; Tit. ii. 13; Heb. ix. 28).

Admonitions and encouragements of the like tendency (that is, to strengthen us in this place and posture of heart) the Lord Himself seems to me to give, just at the bright and blessed close of the volume.

“ I come quickly ” is announced by Him three times in Rev. xxii.—words directly suited to keep the heart, that listens to them believingly, in the attitude of which I am speaking. But different

words of warning and encouragement accompany this voice :

1. " Behold, I come quickly ; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book " (ver. 7). This warns us that, while we are waiting for Him, we must do so with watchful, obedient, observant minds, heedful of His words.

2. " Behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give everyone according as his work shall be " (ver. 12). This encourages to diligence, telling us, that by the occupation of our talents now during His absence, on the promised and expected return He will have honours to impart to us.

3. " Surely, I come quickly," is again the word (ver. 20). This is a simple promise. It is neither a warning nor an encouragement. Nothing accompanies the announcement, as in the other cases. It is, as it were, simply a promise to bring *Himself* with Him on His coming again. But it is the *highest* and the *dearest* thing. The heart may be silent before a warning and before an encouragement ; such words may get their audience in secret from the conscience. But this promise of the simple personal return of Christ gets its answer from the saints (" Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"), " Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Thus the Lord, after this various and beautiful manner, does the business of the Spirit in the Apostles. His own voice, in these different and strik-

ing announcements, encourages the saints to maintain the attitude of waiting for Him.

Great things are a-doing. The Church, the Jew, and the Gentile are all in characteristic activity, each full of preparation and expectancy. *But faith waits for that which comes not with such things.* The rapture of the saints is part of the mystery, part of "the hidden wisdom." The coming of the Son of God from heaven is a fact, as I judge, apart altogether from the history or the condition of the world around.



ALLIANCES AND CONFEDERATIONS.*

"Associate yourselves, O ye peoples, and ye shall be broken in pieces. . . Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught, speak the word and it shall not stand. . . Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear. . . And He shall be for a sanctuary."—Is. viii. 9-14.

Few things can be more important, or distressing in a certain sense, than the widely accepted proposal of the world's reformation by means of the mental and moral cultivation of mankind, as opposed to God's redemption by the blood of His Son.

It is nothing short of this (as an object) which

* The moment seems opportune to reproduce the above paper, written a quarter of a century ago, in view of the failure of man's latest attempt (The Peace Congress) to bring about a millennium without Christ, so fresh in the minds of all. Ed : R.

is being attempted through existing institutions, whether established by voluntary efforts, as formerly; or, as now, by legislative enactments and governmental patronage, for they alike contemplate man as a member of this creation.

In addition to these establishments may be discovered, upon a higher level, the religious organizations and co-operative societies of the day, which embrace other objects, it is true, but still recognize man as a citizen of the world.

Even Christian associations, so-called, which rise upon this graduated scale and leave their own mark, stop entirely short of "a new creature in Christ," and "I, crucified to the world." By all such combinations of state-policy and social enterprise, it is hoped and confidently stated by the world's leaders, that the political and natural rights of men will soon be recognized; and that the suffrage may be universally extended, when its populations have been fitted by these educational schemes for its exercise, and all be then led forward, in one encouraging effort of getting good and doing good to the world, where they are.

As a fair consequence, the governments of Europe and the States, may, in their turn, as well expect by some gigantic effort to rise up out of their iron and clay formations and develop themselves in brass or silver, and, by thus working backward, endeavour to reach "the head of gold" (Dan. ii.).

The melancholy interest which one naturally feels about these movements and expectations is

deepened, because they are seen to be unscriptural and futile when judged in the light of the word of God. On this account it is that feelings of another kind lay hold on those who remember they were once upon this treadmill for themselves ; and thus, the one great absorbing desire *now* is, the deliverance of such as are still hard at work in the Egyptian house of bondage.

Another fact weighs heavily upon the spirit of the emancipated ones, namely, that these combined efforts, in all their gigantic forces, are proof of alienation of mind from God, and to the way by which He invites and beseeches men to be reconciled to Himself, by the death of His Son. There is a fellowship which God has thus formed with believers in Christ, and into which in grace He calls ; but this is not our present subject.

A confederacy of continental nations, in this our century, sought to reach a "Holy alliance" for themselves (many will remember it) as a ground of universal peace, and this was vauntingly declared to have been formed, but no sooner celebrated by the nations comprised in that alliance, than unholily violated. It has long since passed away from its expected longevity, into the pages of disappointed history. This failure gave place to a further and last attempt to reach a commonwealth of peace and prosperity by "the balance of power" amongst "the ten toes" of Daniel's prophetic image ; but this was a rope of sand, and, following upon "The Holy alliance," only threw each of

the great powers into warlike attitude for aggression or self-defence. Nothing else could follow these last abortive efforts to form an international brotherhood but the existing armaments, with their iron-clads and turret-ships, in a proud defiance of one nation against another, in connection with all the innumerable rifles and *chassepots* of the ever-training armies which they embrace, in view of a coming and extended war.

But to proceed. It is not intended in this paper to say anything more upon true Christian fellowship, "which is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," on the part of those who, in matchless grace, have been brought "out of darkness into His marvellous light," as it is not its subject. The fact has been already stated ; we have now to examine its counterfeits.

Enough has been said of associations, unions, and mutual alliance societies, in their multiplications and varieties, to prove that fellowship in itself is the common want of the world.

An instructed Christian, judging by the light of God's word, must sooner or later admit that the need and call for these formations among men is but the avowal (unintentional it may be) of "the fall," by which mankind has shut itself up to its own inventions, and in wilfulness and wickedness broken loose from God. (cf. Is. l. 11). These are but their own sorry productions, alas, and the fruit of their poor resources, when left to themselves like Cain, who went out from the presence

of God, to take his place as a "fugitive and vagabond in the earth." He had reduced himself to himself, and to make terms of agreement with his neighbour, if haply he could, where the old dragon and Satan held his power and seat: I only refer so far back to show, that the primary and common drift, or, to speak morally, the *fact* of the fall and of original sin, was likewise a falling away from God; and threw man upon his fellow in guilt for sympathy, and in a common confession of departure, if not too far sunk, or else, in sinful confederation, to war against the righteous judgment of God which he could not escape.

But leaving this original ground, and its demands and supplies, we may look into other varieties of modern times, and the forms and fashions, religious or otherwise, with which we are unavoidably familiar.

Still God acted on behalf of men; He had not forsaken the world, and, by the introduction of Judaism as a grand system of legislation and of external worship, established with them on the earth, He founded a theocracy which was intended as the centre of outward peace and prosperity for Israel and the surrounding nations. This enabled the Jehovah of that favoured people to lead them into the land of Canaan, and dwell with them according to His promises. The patterns and forms which He gave out in grace (when the true knowledge of God was lost by mankind at large) and by which He opened a way between Himself and

Israel for conditional blessing, had been finished and set up in the tabernacle of Moses ; and again, with further developments and aids, in the temple and throne of Solomon.

It is very needful and precious to us to bear in mind the facts we are now tracing—that God would neither leave Himself without witness, as to communion and intercourse with His people on earth, nor suffer mankind unrebuked to perish in their alienation of mind and confederacy of will against Him by the formation of their own fellowships as they attempted at Babel. Nevertheless, it is sad to remember, that whatever God in love gave for the true knowledge of Himself in communion with patriarchs or the nation, must most surely turn against them governmentally if not used for His glory in their midst, and become a new measure for their correction in righteous judgment.

Nor is this all : for Satan, the enemy of God and man, catches up anything and everything which has once had the sanction of divine authority ; but has been forfeited and spoiled by transgression and abuse. Nothing will suit Satan so well as that which no longer suits God. Whatever is thus put aside as no longer suitable for “ the sanctuary of God,” becomes the choicest material for the devil’s mint and coinage ; else, how could he get the whole world at last to worship the beast and his image, and to say, “ Who is like unto the beast ? ” These corruptions of what once came from God, and their forfeiture on the part of those to

whose hands they were committed, added to the awful fact that Satan delights to turn them into capital and make these forfeits his new material of currency, bring us on to the consideration of the ecclesiastical and religious fellowships in our own day.

These take their character necessarily from Christianity, and likewise from Christ and the church, mingled it is true with the previous forms and ritualism of Judaistic observances. Let us bear in mind that the devil has lastly corrupted Christianity too, and added *this* to the ill-gotten stores, with which he is trading largely throughout Christendom and the world. As regards Christianity and the professing church likewise (this last, and which should have been the highest, witness of truth on the earth), the Son of man has said, when walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, "I will spue thee out of my mouth;" and so the Apocalypse reveals "the woman as sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast." The thing which Christ rejects is, in Satan's hands, become the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. The heavens, so to speak, have thus emptied on the earth all they had to give in the way of recovering grace, if the hands were competent to retain, or appreciate and use, the means; but alas, all that was bestowed on the ground of man's responsibility to God has dropped out and been forfeited, only to put increasing power into the grasp of Satan. The huge confederacy he has

In this way formed against God and Christ, and the alliance he has thus made between mankind and himself, and their fellowships and agreements one with another, is "the mystery of iniquity" in the Revelation, by which the failure of all inward and public testimony closes in judgment upon the world.

Historically and prophetically we may thus look at the origin of these human fellowships and their final character and form, under the energetic and guiding enmity of Satan, "the god of this world," and "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (2 Cor. iv. 4 ; Eph. ii. 2).

When this system of confederated greatness and pride has reached its height, then it is that God refuses and judges it, "for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets ; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xviii).

Inside, however, and in a measure distinct from the world's fellowships, are those ecclesiastical and religious ones, which are accepted mainly by consciences exercised upon "the good and evil," but not knowing, or refusing, the Christ of God, and Him who has called His people "unto the fellowship of His Son" (1 Cor. i.).

It is obvious that all external and governmental systems, constituted by regal authority and conducted by parliamentary legislation, would not meet the uneasiness of such consciences upon

another and the far deeper question of sin and holiness in the presence of God, much less settle it. Nor was the best thing at Rome which Christendom presented, or its Eastern and Western churches more satisfactory on account of their contradictory creeds and dogmas. The dissatisfaction therefore which arose from a semi-political system, such as Popery on the one hand, with its indulgences and penances, and the uncertainty which national churches produced on the other, reduced the keeping of one's conscience (where there was any) to one's self, and what became individual, or else left an opening as to means and appliances for anything and everything which in time might appear more promising.

Two great systems, however, sprang out of this general dissatisfaction, and have become established—one is the *Conventual*, and the other the *Sacramental*, system—and both offer, in their respective ways, to restore man to this broken fellowship with God. Merely social and political unions and their nationalities were declined, on the weighty discovery that *God* was in question, rather than man and his neighbour.

The *Conventual* system embraced a religious life within walls to meet this emergency, and separated its votaries from the world by being enclosed out of its sight. The *Sacramental* system connected itself with a contemplative life, fastings and prayers, hours spent in church, on high days

and festivals, but not the confessional and oratory, as with the Conventual.

In either, the *body* must be all but ignored by fasting or penances, when required to bring it under, that the soul might be kept free from all worldly thought, or affection and desire. Under these restrictions and impositions upon the body, it is supposed the soul would rise into such a state of ecstasy, and perhaps beatitude, as to reach the full manifestation of Christian perfection.

Besides these Conventual and Sacramental systems of to-day, there is yet the Evangelistic movement, and the adoption of the Mosaic law, as "a rule of life," by which the body and its members are sought to be controlled and brought into subjection, in order to possess a fellowship of uncertain character, indeed not beyond the seventh of Romans as to experience, and forced to accept "O wretched man that I am!" as the proper state and condition of this so-called Christian. There are off-shoots of this Evangelistic system which claim from its advocates a self-surrender to God, and a putting the will on His side, accompanied by such a consecration of all the powers and faculties of nature, and the body, as would lead to a "higher Christian life," etc., instead of (a full redemption being known) *present* union with a risen glorified Christ, maintained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

It is remarkable, that in all these ecclesiastical and evangelistic movements the human body seems

to be viewed and dealt with as the one thing in the way, and the main hindrance to the recovery of a lost fellowship with God: and on this account Conventualism, with its severer measures of penance and privation, or Sacramentalism, with its ritualistic observances, offers to carry the *soul* beyond the contaminations of the body.

The Monastic system, with its continental pilgrimages and new order of "the Sacred Heart," might have been added to these; but these so-called pilgrimages are properly speaking "excursions by railways" and connected with hotel accommodations and refreshments, under which the body escapes the impositions and privations formerly practised for its mortification. It is merely passed through the genuflexions and continuous adorations due to the Virgin, alternated by the counting of beads, and the daily lessons and hourly duties of "sisters of mercy," by which it is sought to bring the body back to its original virtues in "holy communion."

Still it is the human body, and a fallen nature, that occupies each and all of these systems, however they may vary in the choice of means for its subjugation, or its voluntary surrender to God, or its fuller consecration to His service.

One of the last of these pilgrimages was to Parai-le-Monial, and "the Sacred Heart," and this (as may be remembered) was arranged for from London, through France, with a well-known excursionist company by return tickets, under the

sanction of Rome, and the blessing of the Pope.

In the great outside confederations of the world, and the alliances between man and man, led on by the wiles of the devil, it is quite otherwise, for the body is at a high premium, As might be supposed, man and all his physical energies are taxed to the utmost, in order to their development and display, for Satan knows "that his time is short."

Fire and water, which in an earlier age were viewed chiefly as destructive elements, have now become allied, and by their generative power, are the necessary and hourly appliances for transit and gain. The millions who are thus whirled along in express trains over the globe, still needed a rapidity better suited for the transmission of their overtaxed thoughts and words, and these are flashed along the wires to the world's end, upon poles which support them in the air, or else by sub-marine cables across the channels and the seas. Man has become a cosmopolite, and is a wonder to himself by his inventions and appliances. Or else a fancied, but necessary, brotherhood in misfortune has sprung up, by which he becomes co-operative and international in his largest ideas and undertakings—but without God and without Christ !

And now, what is the result of all these and other fellowships in the church and in the world? Rationalistic, and infidel theories, in opposition to the word of God, abound, and are the palpable but plain answer, as given by philosophers and men of

science, who rule the day, and are themselves ruled by "the spirit of the age." Indifferentism and immorality would number up the rest of the outsiders—such as take things as they come, till their "soul is required" of them, or the impending judgment overtakes them, when "the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance, etc. (2 Thes. i.).

In conclusion, it is obvious that all these systems, religious or otherwise, have still got man in hand as a moral being, and are seeking how to educate him in his generation, so as to develop what is good; or else by confession and penance, or sacraments and prayers, to curb what is bad—for it is the devil's interest to keep up this deceit. It is only at the cross that such matters can be made plain for those who are simple enough to see the end of the first man in the death of Christ. As regards men and the world, the cross witnesses to the rupture of the last tie. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," but the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of His love was the open refusal either to accept His mediation or to suffer His presence in their midst on *such* a footing. What fellowship can there be with God, in the face of that cross, which is the standing proof of the outburst of the world's enmity against Him and His love, when they nailed Jesus thereon? And they cried out all at once, saying, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas." So Pilate "released unto them him

that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired ; but he delivered Jesus to *their will* " (Luke xxiii.).

The words of our Lord may fitly close this bird's-eye view of existing alliances and ripening confederations : " I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not ; if *another* shall come in his own name, him ye will receive " (John v.). Barabbas instead of Jesus ; the dragon instead of God ; the antichrist instead of Christ ; the false prophet instead of the true one ; the beast instead of the Lamb slain ; are become the authorities and names by which the devil is suffered to wind up this world's history, and by which he fatally plunges those who are " led captive by him at his will " into the last scenes of the apocalyptic judgments of God. The earth clears itself, by such means, of those who have corrupted it, whether by Satanic or human energies ; yet only that hell may open its mouth to receive them. The earth thus cleanses itself from its pollutions by destroying them that destroyed it, " and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever " (Rev. xx.).

What an unspeakable comfort for our souls, and what a mercy, that we can turn away from the consideration of such fellowships as these, and their issues (and invite others to do so) to speak of another which God has formed for all who are Christ's, and into which He leads us by the Holy Ghost.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, AND FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.

(*Sequel to "Alliances and Confederations."*)

When we examine the word of God as to the nature and character of true Christian knowledge and of our fellowship with Christ, one is astonished to see upon what it is based, and by what means it is to be held and maintained. Even this feeling is deepened as we inquire further, what must be its wonderful subjects, and when, or how, to be accomplished and realized by us, in the light where God dwells. Nor must we forget the fact that this knowledge and fellowship come in upon the proved insufficiency of that mode of intercourse, which nevertheless shone out brightly in one and another with whom God walked upon the earth, before the flood and since, and to whom He gave testimony that they pleased Him.

Whatever the grace and the goodness were on God's part, in such intimacies with the patriarchs, or afterwards with the prophets and kings and the nation of Israel, still, the ruin and the groaning of creation were so identified with sin and death on man's side as to offer no fit materials for real fellowship with God, either in the righteousness of His ways, or, much less, in the holiness of His own nature.

Besides all this, there lay things in the mind of God which creation and the creature could not bring to light, so that another ground for lasting and true communion with Himself was wanted for their display. This has been formed, in the wisdom of God, by sending forth His beloved Son into the world, and by an accomplished redemption through the cross of Christ (available for everyone, but only really known and enjoyed by those who

take their true place before God as lost sinners and believe the record He has given of His Son), which has met all such existing deficiencies and antagonisms, and removed them. And not only so, but that same work, in death and resurrection, has brought believers to the Father as "*new* creatures," in present and everlasting favour, through the Son of His love. The foundation of Christian fellowship is thus based upon our redemption to God by the blood of Christ, and is formed by the ascension of our Lord Jesus to the right hand of God, in His declared worthiness to become the Centre and Depository of all the purposes of God, and worthy of all honour and glory, as having now carried them out and made them true in Himself. The Second Man in heaven, exalted above all principalities and powers, and Head over all things to the church, must needs have been established *there* for Himself, according to the counsels of God, and in His own righteous title, before a fellowship with the Father and the Son could be revealed, or *we* be called into the participation of it by grace.

Christian fellowship, whether in its objects or subjects, lies, therefore, outside this old creation, though announced and designed for those who are yet amongst its ruins. It exists in the glorified Son of man, in the place where He now sits as Head and "Beginning of the creation of God." Another revelation of and from God was thus required to make Him known in the Son, and has been since introduced by the Holy Ghost, according to the promise of the Father, come down as the Glorifier of Christ, the Centre of God's counsels, and, moreover, as the Witness to us that we are united to Him, who has there become our life in glory. Born of God, created anew in Christ, quickened, raised, and seated together in Him in the heavenly places, are some of the necessary

changes needful on our part for this fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost, too, as the Spirit of sonship, has come down to dwell in us, the Witness that we have not only this life in Christ, but are brought into the relationship of children with the Father: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba" (Gal. iv.). This is very blessed for us, because realized in the consciousness of life—divine life—known and understood in this relationship with God, and vital in our hearts, as enjoyed in the Father's delight in us. We are one in this with His beloved Son, and the Holy Ghost produces in us the new-born feelings and affections which respond to love like His. "We dwell in God, and God in us."

In the earlier account of the communications of this life, we may recall how Jesus said to Nicodemus, respecting fellowship in the earthly things, "Ye must be born again," to see or enter into "the kingdom of God." Beyond this, and when the time was come—not merely for the heavenly things to be told out, but for the hidden mystery of Christ and the church, and the secret purposes of God to be brought to light, and made known to us in the ascended Son of Man—how could *such* communion be maintained on our part, except under the anointing of the Holy Ghost? God might, and did, in times past make His ways known to Moses, and His acts unto the children of Israel, for these were *earthly*, and therefore mainly governmental, or dispensational, in their accomplishments. But something worthy of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ remained "hidden in God," till the Son of the bosom came forth in His marvellous ministries to make it manifest, first in His own person, and then to lay the foun-

dations of these counsels in present grace for us by His cross. It is the coming glory that must fully tell out the secret and display the manner of the Father's love to us, by our being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to see Him, to be like Him, and to be with Him where He is. Moreover, this eternal life, which was with the Father, was manifested to us, and has been seen, and heard, and handled, when "the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us." This is the life which has been imparted to us, that we might be competent to understand the things which are freely given to us of God. We have also the "mind of Christ." Our body, too, is the "temple of the Holy Ghost," which we have of God, and by this Spirit we are anointed for present fellowship with the Father in unclouded peace, and sealed unto the day of redemption. How true it is, not only to faith, but in our knowledge of ourselves, that "if any man be *in* Christ, he is a *new* creation, old things are passed away, behold all things are become *new*; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."

Thus this eternal life is in the Son, and those who are united to Him, "who is our life," are all one in this communion of life, and are spiritually made *one*, as having the mind of Christ and the unction of the Spirit. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost constitute this divine fellowship, in their own Person and Godhead, but in a well known relation to us in love; and it is in this, by grace and redemption and our new creation, we are called and comprehended, as brought to God, in the Son of His bosom. "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." This object and comprehensive purpose was thus stated in John xvii: "This is life eternal, that they

might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." It is into this circle we are introduced, in the light; and that so really, that the Spirit who writes of it, and establishes us in this communion, declares these as *our* realities (summarily by John), and says, "'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"; and "these things write we unto you, that *your joy* may be *full*." Blessed portion for us, as known in and by the Holy Ghost!

These Scriptures, and such considerations, may determine our first inquiry, viz., upon what Christian communion is based; and, likewise, with whom and by what means it is held. There yet remains the question in what this fellowship consists? and collaterally, in what respects does it differ from God's testimony to Himself in this Adam creation, and likewise from His intercourse with Abraham as "the father of many nations," or with David, "the man after God's own heart," and the royal promises of the throne and kingdom in Jerusalem? These inquiries are of the deepest interest, as opening out the ways of God to men on the earth, and are profitable to us as displaying "the manifold wisdom of God," from first to last, so much of which remains yet to be accomplished in "the times and the seasons which," as Jesus said on His departure, "the Father hath put in His own power."

The earliest lessons by which God gave forth this knowledge of Himself to His creatures was by the six days' work of creation, and the responsibility of mankind consisted in glorifying Him as God, in the light and consciousness of His providential care and goodness, "filling their hearts with food and gladness." Indeed, Paul's epistle to the Romans opens by the testimony it bears to these facts as the basis of such intercourse, viz.,

that "the invisible things of God were clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." But man changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of corruptible man and four-footed beasts, so that the ground and material for *this* intimacy were alike lost.

Creation had, nevertheless, its wonders, past finding out, and its deeper mysteries, which were hidden in God. The great external world, or "the heavens and the earth," manifested the former; but, the inclosure out of it, as in Gen. ii., contained the latter. In the beginning "God created the heavens and the earth . . . and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," this is Gen. i.; but in the midst of this creation "the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and *there* He put the man whom He had formed." "Great things past finding out, and wonders without number," in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, as Job said, still occupy the faculties of men, as material for speculation or for scientific research and for theories by which *they* become great. Would that they were convicted in conscience by this abiding external testimony to "the power and Godhead," as that very knowledge from which they have departed, and on account of which sin they will be judged. Such have not yet even glimpsed, much less walked with Him in the other and deeper mysteries of "the garden," so as to find out the kernel that lay inside this great outer shell. Creation "has its mines for silver and its place for gold, where they fine it; iron is also taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone;" but Jehovah employed these afterwards, when *He* wrought in gold and silver and precious stones, and in purple and scarlet

and fine twined linen, to give forth to His people His intentions about heavenly things, and their better sacrifices, which, in due time, opened out "the new and living way into the holiest."

There lay hidden, however, in the counsels and purposes of God, a secret undisclosed, a mystery of which the garden that "the Lord God planted" was to be the special depository. Adam was only a "figure of Him that was to come," and of whom it is written, "the Lord possessed *me* in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." This hidden One, and the yet undisclosed mystery of Christ and the church, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, were *now* to be brought forward and put into shape and form. It was in the planted garden of Gen. ii., where God wrought with the man, in the midst of creation, that He displayed this masterpiece. It was *there* "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of His ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made He a woman, and brought her unto the man."

Creation may have, and does hold, its secrets and wonders under the power and Godhead, but the garden contained this "mystery," hidden in God Himself from everlasting, and now set up (in time) upon the earth. Nor will this be fully taken out of mystery till Christ comes a second time and the shout bids us rise up to meet Him; then to be manifested eternally in the new heavens and the new earth, to which the visible heavens and earth, which are now, become in this view merely provisional and introductory.

These formations and foundations for the true knowledge of God and of Christ's glory, and this mystery of Christ and the church, which will be

for the full manifestation of His wisdom and power, from everlasting to everlasting, have been thus introduced in "the planted garden," and embodied in a way and manner with which we are familiar, through scenes in our every-day life: "Therefore shall *a man* leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." The comment and application of this by the Holy Ghost, when the time came to make this "one flesh," a matter of revelation and testimony by Paul, recurs with freshness and power to our souls: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." It is passing into its completion *in us*, by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost—we, who are members of His body, who are of His flesh and of His bones, and have been baptized by one Spirit into this unity. That which was from everlasting, before ever the world was—that which was set up in Eden, when God rested from all the works which He had made—has now ceased to be in mystery, through this work of the Holy Ghost in uniting *us* to Christ as Head.

It is in this innermost circle of His own delights that *we* find our place and portion, who are by grace and adoption brought into this oneness with Christ, the exalted Head over all things to the church, which is His body, "the fullness of Him who filleth all in all." Our fellowship is thus established with the Father and the Son by the Holy Ghost, and Christian communion is properly comprehended in this, and in the mystery of Christ and of God and the church. Before the fall, and before sin entered into the world or Satan tempted Eve, we are taught by these Paradisaical symbols what the grand result is to which God is working for His glory. The first in pattern, and the first in an *unfallen* creation, but the last to be made mani-

fest is the Bride of the Lamb, when the glory of God descends out of heaven, and the new Jerusalem is seen to come down as a Bride, adorned for her husband. Indeed, we may ask, how could this world, when sin had entered into it, and death passed upon all men because that all had sinned, *possibly* supply even a type of *our* great mystery, and that mystery "Christ and the church," His body and His Bride?

This may serve in outline as a reply to the inquiry, in what Christian fellowship properly consists. It exists in that which the Father's love kept hidden in Himself, for the Son of His bosom, till "the fulness of the time was come" for Him to send "forth His Son, made of a woman," to accomplish all that was given Him to do for the glory of God in the heavens above and the earth beneath, and to make an atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Himself. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone (were the words of Jesus at that hour); but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It was out of *this* deep sleep, for three days and three nights in "the belly of the earth," and out of the side of Him who lay there, that the woman, the Bride, was formed: "He loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Christian fellowship consists with Christ in "all things that the Father hath," as well as in the glory which the Father has given the Son; and beyond this, in a personal communion and present enjoyment of that love wherewith He is loved—a love which is in itself greater and more blessed than all that such love can bestow. Still the Father's love to His Son will and must display

itself for its own delight and Christ's glory; and to magnify likewise His person, as well as to make great His names and titles, in this world, where He has been disowned, and before angels and principalities and powers in the heavenly places, who waited upon Him in the days of His humiliation. It is into all this coming scene of joy and blessing that we are introduced as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," whatever the height and depth of the purposed glory may be. We are to be with Him, even when, "in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him, in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated that we should be to the praise of His glory." This is the church's portion, and marks the difference between Christ and Christian fellowship, from the intercourse by which the knowledge of God, as Almighty and Jehovah, was maintained with the patriarchs and the people of Israel, under Moses and Joshua, or David and Solomon and the prophets.

Another difference is that all their blessings were given out in promises, and under covenant to a Seed, for the restitution of all things in the earthly places. Let it be observed that if, as we have seen, "the garden" contained more precious deposits and mysteries within its sacred inclosure than the great external creation possessed, even before the fall of Adam, its lord and head, it yet remained for God in grace to come forth into this groaning creation and proclaim Himself as above the ruins of sin, and Satan's power, and the penalty of death which even He had inflicted upon the sinner. He who alone could make *such* a path for Himself did so, and brought in His reserves in the way of promise and covenant to a Seed, because original blessing in Adam was forfeited, and be-

Because sin had entered in and man was driven out. It was in this character, too, that He trod the path of "the burning bush" with His redeemed people; after the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; and in all things God has been, and is still, so manifesting Himself. By the six days' work of creation the *invisible* things were and are seen, even His eternal power and Godhead; and by the seventh-day rest He discovered Himself yet further. The garden inclosed the image of Him that was to come, and the yet undisclosed mystery of His deep sleep, and then the woman pointing to the far off marriage of the Lamb. "God brought her to the man."

The blessing was thus first secured for Christ and the church by what "the Lord God planted" and made, and brought and united to Adam in Paradise, as it lay with Himself, in counsel, before the fall. Besides this, the declaration of judgment against sin was afterwards made to Satan, "the liar and murderer from the beginning," that the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. It is here we find the fulness of present and eternal blessing grouped together for ultimate and everlasting glory, and the curse upon the devil pronounced, till the bottomless pit opens its mouth for him, and finally the lake of fire. What a way God has made for the knowledge of Himself in the midst of ruins like these!

The reserves of God are only to be summed up in the Seed of the woman and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The faith of God's elect finds its relief and resource in this promised Seed, the last Adam. The path of one and another, as recorded in Heb. xi., passed out of the great external creation and its groanings (in hope) as they saw Christ's day, and were glad. The "better thing," which God has reserved "*for us*," for which they wait, and all

creation too, connects them with the hidden purposes of the garden in measure, and is become their safe and sufficient guarantee of unforfeited blessing, that they too may gather up their best and brightest hopes in the Seed of the woman. Promises and covenants and prophecies of varying character and extent are scattered all along by God on the pathway of the forlorn and destitute. Good things to come are assured to faith in the midst of increasing evil and corruption, even after it repented God that He had made man upon the earth, and He had destroyed it with a flood. Israel will be brought into this knowlege of God hereafter, through *their* fellowship with Christ, as the Messiah of this once "cast off people:" "For they shall all know me," etc. Blessings and promises and covenants abound further, as we follow Noah out of the ark, and are confirmed by "the bow in the cloud" to him, and to his seed, and to every living creature. If we trace the pathway of God Almighty with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, through the book of Genesis, it is but to see that God has given out to them afresh all created blessing, of "the heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breast and of the womb, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." Nor is the record of God in His ways with His people only by promises of future blessing, for the book of Exodus is replete with deliverances and victories over oppressors, and from cruel bondage and the iron furnace. The "I AM" came down into their midst and gave forth the knowledge of Himself in the person of Moses and Aaron, as the Jehovah of Israel, and went along with them "to find out a resting-place" for Himself and His people.

If it be wonderful to see God thus giving over again the natural blessings of the heavens and the

earth, which were originally connected with Adam, and putting all under sure promise and covenant to the Seed, how much more marvellous is it to see Him exalted at the right hand of God, and to know now this Second man *there* and who He is ! The "appointed Heir" has been born of the woman, and, as the true Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has come into the world with an indisputable title to all covenanted and promised blessing. Still more wondrous will it be when, as the Son of man and Seed of David, the Word made flesh, He shall come "a second time," to take every promise *out* of promise into fulfilment, and every covenant, from first to last, *out* of covenant into manifested blessing. He has yet to do this.

Besides all this was God's desire that the Israel whom He loved should make Him a sanctuary and a tabernacle, according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount of God, that He might dwell amongst them, and accompany them by the pillar of cloud or of fire, by day and night. To these were added in the book of Leviticus sacrificial types, and a knowledge of God in external relations, by means of "a ritual," to be observed in their daily, monthly and yearly offerings. Only one person could be trusted with patterns which were to express *these* thoughts of God, or show the manner in which He was to be worshipped as became Him who dwelt in the Holy of Holies, and yet in grace had to do with a people in their sins. Only two persons, and those endowed by the Spirit of God "in all cunning workmanship," were authorized to construct these vessels and put them into their splendid forms of glory and beautiful significance, and this they did.

Here, again, we may ask, who could He be that in due time was to take everything in the sanctuary and tabernacle *out* of figure and form,

and embody them in Himself? Who could He be, and what is His name, but Him who, "when He cometh into the world, saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a *body* hast thou prepared Me." He who "taketh away the first, that he may establish the second," declares that He has taken all *out* of shadow into substance and divine reality, for Himself and for His own, and for God.

The outside world, replete with with all its promises and covenants, the nation with its tabernacle and sanctuary, accompanied by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, all pointed on to the coming One who did but cast all these shadows before Him.

Add yet to these, other and more gorgeous displays of God's thoughts given to David and carried out by Solomon, for "the temple of Jehovah's rest" in Jerusalem, with the royalties of the throne and the glory of the coming kingdom, and we shall see who *He is* that required the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in the Holy Land to pre-figure Him, in such sort as that eyes of flesh and blood might catch a glimpse of Him, and human thoughts become familiar with Him. With what joy did they say, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write."

Beyond the Pentateuch and the Chronicles of the Kings lie the long line of the prophets and their prophecies, which spread out over the millennial earth and the populations of the world. And who is to carry prophecy *out* into all its fulfilments, both in the heavens above and the earth beneath, so that not "a jot or tittle shall fail," but Him who has already gathered types and patterns, promises and covenants, around Himself, to illustrate the glory of His person who required them all, in order to form the basis and supply the material of an abiding fellowship with God, and to

demonstrate that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Before He comes forth from heaven in His own glory and the glory of His Father and the glory of His holy angels, He has left the bright witness behind Him, at the mount of His transfiguration; that all natural and national blessings were His by birthright as well as by righteous title, as Son of Abraham and Son of David. The Holy Ghost adds His witness to this, by Peter: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His Majesty, for He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the Shekinah, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'"

He has, moreover, left an undeniable witness on Mount Calvary, the mount of His crucifixion, that every sacrificial type has been taken up and fulfilled in His sufferings and death, and confirmed by His resurrection. It was on Mount Calvary He cried out of the darkness, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabacthani." He who was greater than all that represented Him, and who said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," hung upon the cross and gave up the ghost. All was done that was given Him to do, up to the glory of God in the Holiest; and, "behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent," as the only but all sufficient answer on the part of God the Father, and of creation to its Deliverer, that a new and living way was opened into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus. All that He undertook has been carried out to perfection below, and confirmed for unfailing blessing by His ascension "to the right hand of the majesty on high."

God is left free, in His own unsullied holiness, to act for His own glory ; all hindrances have been taken out of the way, and nothing before Him to judge, except the enemies of Christ and the wicked, who refuse the outlet of the cross as the open door into fellowship with God the Father in present and eternal blessing.

It belongs to God, *now*, to make manifest the further knowledge of Himself in the heavens above and the earth beneath by a visible Christ, when He brings in the new character and measure of glory which is due to the Last Adam, as a reward of the travail of His soul. What a consideration is this for the Father's love, and with what delight will He open out the glories of the Son in the ages to come ! No longer hindered by the unworthiness and incapacity of the creature, but having the worthiness of Him for His only rule who said, "Glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee," what must the blessing and the blessedness be, when the Lamb once slain is the governing Object for the display of the Father's love, as well as of His wisdom and power ; and we, by grace, partakers in His joy, one with Christ, and introduced by Him into this fellowship.

The difference between the Old Testament and the New, or between the nation and the church, or between Judaism and Christianity is that in the former God could only give out His intentions of blessing till the incarnation of Christ took these all into possession in His person, and made them yea and amen in Himself and to the joint-heirs by His death and resurrection. Christianity is Christ known in fulfilment, the Holy Ghost in present testimony and witness, and God glorified in accomplishment.

Another difference in the ways of God is this, that originally He made a responsible man in crea-

tion the starting point and a typical centre of His actings, whereas the Son of man, the last Adam in glory above, the beginning of the New Creation of God, is now become the glorified Head, the eternal Centre and Source of unfailing bliss and joy. In the new order of the Apocalypse, the holy Jerusalem is seen *descending* out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; whereas in the old order of Genesis, everything was committed to Adam in responsibility, and was to issue from man to God, and failed when tested on that *ascending* scale.

But to return from these considerations of earthly blessing for "the future earthly people" in earthly places, to our own proper Christian fellowship with Christ, where He *now is* in the heavenlies.

They and we are alike in this, that we wait for the respective manifestation of blessing and glory to each, in full result because Christ has "sat down" on the Father's throne. The hour of these manifestations of accomplished purpose belongs to God, and waits upon His will to open out who has the times and seasons in His own hand. He will gather out the church first, and complete the body of Christ, as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and translate her into the heavens, where we take our places as sons likewise in the Father's house. The intentions of God, which were given out in mystery from the garden which the Lord God planted in Eden, are the secret things which we carry along with us, over and above all the external ways of God to Moses, and His dispensational acts to the children of Israel, and even His present government of the world and the Gentiles, without hesitation or reserve. We have another calling and destiny, beyond the great outside world or the elect nation taken out from the nations in its midst; we are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world.

It is important to see that nothing in the way of mystery, or promise, or covenant, remains unfulfilled in the person of Christ, through His work upon the cross, in our redemption and His own resurrection, for the glory of God the Father. Moreover, the Holy Ghost has come down to dwell with us, as the witness and seal of this great fact. The Son of man has been in the heavens for the last eighteen hundred years in no less a character than the Glorifier of the Father, and as "the Forerunner" of His people, there to appear in the presence of God for us. His new and present work of priestly intercession for us is near its end. How close all must be now upon fulfilment, and on His coming forth as the Melchisedec, "King of righteousness, King of peace," to bless His willing nation, and the twelve tribes of Israel in Emanuel's land, after the manifestation of God's power has taken up the church to be with Christ, and in glorifying us with His Son.

What was once hidden in God from before the foundation of the world, has been set up in the garden in figure, taken out of figure by the appearing of Jesus Christ the Son and Heir, and made yea and amen in Himself, and for the Church by His death and resurrection. His entrance into heaven itself, where He sits on the right hand of God, is witnessed unto us by the Holy Ghost sent down from above as the Glorifier of Christ Jesus, "the Lord of lords, and the King of kings." What remains, but that the last great action of God should draw aside the heavens which conceal the hidden One, as He aforetime rent the veil which concealed Himself, and bring out into manifestation and result by His coming and glorious appearing the world's deliverance, and the universal blessing for which the whole creation is yet waiting?

The Christ of God is Himself sitting on the Father's throne ; the church on earth is waiting for the Lord's descent and the shout ; the departed ones who are with Christ are waiting ; creation is waiting in hope for the manifestation of the sons of God ; Israel is waiting to be gathered from the four corners of the earth at the second coming of the Messiah, Jesus-Jehovah ; the Gentiles wait for the appearing of the Root of Jesse, for Him that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, for Him in whom the Gentiles shall trust. It belongs to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to begin this new history of "*manifestation of all in glory,*" by the "*rising up*" of Christ in heaven, where He now sits on the right hand of the throne of God. The expectation of the redeemed waits upon the Lord to come forth, and put into manifestation in the heavens, and upon the earth, the hidden counsels of the Father and the Son, as to the body and Bride of the Lamb, which were from everlasting, and to substantiate the promises, with their covenants to the fathers, of permanent peace and blessing on this earth.

The moral power of such revelations as these, and especially when connected in the soul with the *revolutions and judgments of God*, which make room for their establishment in the heavens and upon the earth, is formative of the life and character and walk of the "*man in Christ*" *now*.

He has new ideas and other objects, which attach him to another order of things, of which the glorified "*Son of man*" is the Head and Centre. He has other principles of action, which are supplied from "*this knowledge of God,*" and find their strength and joy in "*this fellowship with Christ ;*" and, practically, he is separated from this present evil world—his "*citizenship is in heaven.*"

Such union on the one hand, and separation on the other, is but the proper fruit of Christianity by the indwelling Spirit, and marks those who walk with God. One and another of our apostles have written to us of these things, and lead the way, under their varied ministries. Peter would have us “pass the time of our sojourning *here* as obedient children, calling upon the Father,” and exhorts us further, on the behaviour suited to us, “wherefore, beloved, seeing that *ye look* for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”

Paul, according to his anointing, carries us into “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and for Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped.’ (Rev. v. 11-14.)

FROM BLINDNESS AND BEGGARY TO WORSHIP.

John ix.

That which is so wonderful in John ix. is that it gives us the history of the passage of a soul from beggary and darkness into being a worshipper of the Son of God. The man passes from this extreme of misery, blindness, and beggary too (for Scripture says, "Is not this he that sat and begged?") into being a worshipper, and that is one of the highest aspects of blessing any soul *can* know. This will be the occupation of the redeemed in heaven. It means such deliverance from self that you are delighting in an object outside yourself, and you are more than satisfied; that is worship. It is more than the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, though I do not want to limit the blessing of being able to walk about in this world with the blessed sense of sins forgiven. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." (1 John ii. 12.) It is not to treat lightly such a word as that, that I speak of something further; but I want you to understand that that is not where *God* stops. You must know forgiveness first; but that is not the end. God's thought of blessing for you is that you may be found a worshipper for evermore in His presence. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." (John iv. 23.)

I cannot go into all the details of this chapter;

but I must notice a few things. One striking characteristic in this blind man was that he went straight ahead. He never turned to the right or to the left ; the moment his eyes were opened he went straight on. And the soul that goes straight on, finds Jews, and synagogues, and parents against him ; still he goes on. He is not ashamed to confess his ignorance either. " I know not," he says ; but he goes on till we find him outside the synagogue in the presence of God.

But there is something more wonderful than this, which you will find in verses 58 and 59 of the preceding chapter, John viii. Jehovah, the One who had watched over Israel in all their manifold ways, was there in their midst, and *they knew Him not*. The leaders in Israel, in the beginning of the chapter, bring into the presence of Jehovah a poor sinner in her sins, and raise the question of what should be done to her. " Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned." (v. 5.) They raise the question about stoning a sinner ; but what comes out in the end of the chapter is not the stoning of the sinner, but the stoning of the Saviour. (v. 59.) As glory after glory shone out about Him, their hatred rose more and more, till " they took up stones to cast at Him." What a story it tells ! Light was there. Into a world of utter darkness He came, bringing light. Think of the darkness that could be felt, and think of the Lord of glory coming down into this world. What a brilliant light was there dis-

played ! “ I am the light of the world.” (Chap. viii. 12.) Does He claim too much for Himself when He claims to be the light of the world ? Can you say, “ Lord, Thou art my light, and outside Thy presence my estimate of everything is false ” ? What a moment when we learn that whatever reckonings we have arrived at, if made outside His presence, are utterly wrong !

Think of the grace and tenderness of that blessed Saviour when He was in this world, and how He uttered that solemn word of warning—“ I am the light of the world : he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” What a proposition ! what words of grace were those ! Those words of grace uttered in that day are as true in this day as when He uttered them. There is the light of life to-day as surely as in that day. It was in Christ then, and it is in Christ now. But before ever you can follow the Saviour, you must come into His presence ; and to come into His presence is to come into the light ; and to come into the light means to be uncovered, and to arrive at what *God* thinks about you. Love and everything you can need are there ; but *light* is there too, and you must be found out. The human religiousness of these Pharisees could not go there—the man with a reputation to keep up will refuse the light of the Saviour’s presence—and *they* took up stones to cast at him. Religious man has done worse than that ; the *cross* was the end. To stone Him was only one of the blossoms of the same plant, if I

may so say. Here is the expression of the same hatred. They would not have the light because it exposed them ; and they would not have the love, for they hated Him. But you will always see that the more man's hatred rises up, the more God's grace rises far above it, and He passed out of their midst to go on for their blessing. His hour was not yet come, so He hid Himself. He turned away from all the violence and hatred found in the heart of man—that heart all the time covered over with religiousness, and ceremony, and sacrifice. How terrible in the eyes of Him who read what was *under* ! Every thought of the heart was as open to Him as the stones they would have hurled at His Person.

But notice : “ And *as* Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth.” This first verse is one of the most wonderful in the chapter ; for it tells what Christ was. Was He so occupied with His own things, or with the hatred and violence of those who had been trying to stone Him, that He had no time to think about the necessities of men and women ? No ; the eyes of Jesus “ *saw* a man which was blind from his birth.” He had time to think of a poor, desolate, blind beggar. All the violence of Israel could not turn Him aside from doing the work He had come to do, nor disturb that blessed, tranquil spirit. He was unruffled, and He had infinite love and grace. He knew what was coming ; He walked in the light of that eternity before Him. He knew what

His grace and power could do, and He was only looking for occasions on which to lavish them ; He saw a needy man. Who can tell what the heart of the Saviour felt? Those occupied in ceremonial observances might pass the beggar by, wrapped up in their observances ; but the Saviour felt about him as none other could. He must have stopped and observed the man. Think of how He observes and watches ! There is not a soul that has a longing, a want, a desire, that Jesus does not see. He has been rejected here ; but He is the same in those realms of light as He was when down here. Jesus knows, Jesus sees, and more, *He feels*. Our poor hearts are so narrow and cramped, so distracted by the things through which we are passing ; but His, never. Divine perfection is in all He does, and if there is one soul who has a need, Christ in heaven sees you, knows you, and will relieve you—and He alone can do it. He did it by His word in that day, and He does it by His word in this day.

Then the disciples asked Him, “ Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind ? ” The Lord shewed that no *special* sin had called forth governmental dealing on God’s part. It does not mean that they were not sinners ; but here was an occasion on which “ the works of God ” could be manifested—a platform on which He could put forth what the sovereign grace and goodness of God were. He came from heaven, not to *rest* here. Earlier in this gospel He says,

“ My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” He knew, when here, labour and weariness ; for (as has often been said) “ love could not rest where sorrow was, and light could not rest where sin was.” There was the One, who from eternity had been the delight of heaven, a Man down here in this world, wearied in it, walking up and down in the midst of necessity. What does He say? “ *I must work.*” What a word for those who are one with Christ for ever—“ I must work . . . the night cometh, when no man can work.” You that are for ever blest, you that have received from God all that He can give you, the hour is coming when you must lay down service for ever, toil behind you for ever ; “ the night commeth, when no man can work.” You never will find a weary soul to say a word to in heaven ; no sorrowful hearts and downcast eyes will be there. But now you have a priceless opportunity ; you can carry forth into this sad world tidings of life and liberty. Christ knew what that judgment was which was soon coming, and He knew what the light of heaven was. He knew the woe there will be when the great white throne is set. Believer, ask God to open your eyes upon what eternity is, and you will find that the little things of life will drop down into their proper place ; you see them in the light of eternity. Christ measured everything in the light of God’s eternity. Think of the value of a soul. If *work* is before you, you never will work ; t if *Christ* is before you, work must follow. It

is the love of *Christ* which constraineth us. Knowing all these precious words, knowing that heaven is open and Christ is waiting to receive every soul that goes to Him, I am amazed that we are not more whole-hearted, earnest and devoted.

The One who could call worlds into existence at the bidding of His word, had time to address Himself to the necessity of this poor beggar. His hands anointed his eyes with the clay. Hands that were soon going to be nailed to the tree, hands that are pierced now—what were they doing? They were anointing eyes that had never been opened on anything here. Oh, what a glorious Saviour! You must be more blind than this poor man was, if you cannot see any glory in the Son of God occupying Himself with the necessities of a poor beggar. He was never more glorious than at that moment. You may say there was glory on the Mount of Transfiguration; but is there not a glory here that surpasses it—a *moral* glory? The Saviour and sinner together here. First He anointed him, and then He spoke. Do you think that poor man ever heard a voice like *that* before? Is there any voice like the voice of Jesus? It was the first time His voice broke on the ear of that beggar. Can you say—

“I heard the *voice* of Jesus say,
Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down,
Thy head upon My breast”?

Then other voices, which attracted you before the voice of Jesus was heard, lose their charm. When you hear that voice you will say, "I never heard anything like *that* before;" and all you will say after will be, "Cause me to hear Thy voice." If you will only take the place of being a listener for the voice of Jesus, your eternal salvation is secure. God wants you to listen to the voice of Jesus.

You may say you are not a poor, blind beggar; you are rich, and can have all you want. Friend, if your *soul* is not saved, if you do not know Jesus, you are *nothing* but a poor, blind beggar; you *are* in want, and you use your money to supply your wants. You say to the world, "I want your pleasures, I want your amusements, and I will give you money for them." There are rich as well as poor beggars in this world, and the fact of your going to the world shows you have not Christ; you have not joy in heaven. It must be one of two things; you are going in for the fashion of this world, which passeth away, or else it is Christ and His joys. I have no doubt we shall see that once blind man in heaven, and should we then ask him, he would tell us that the first moment the voice of Jesus fell on his ear, it was life and blessing. Those hands touched him. There is nothing so tender as the touch of Jesus. The Psalmist could say, "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." That was God dealing with him; but then came the grace.

Notice the extreme simplicity of it all. "He

went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing." Satan tries to deprive souls of the simplicity of the Gospel. It is *divinely* simple; the only question is, Do you *want* a blessing? The difficulty is not with the word of God, but with souls; their inclinations are wrong. If the inclination is after these things, if there is a want of them, it is all simple; but if the inclination is after the world, all is wrong. I ask you this one question, Is there any inclination after Christ in your soul? *Do you want Him?* Would you like to come in contact with Him? Here it was just one statement on the Saviour's part—"Go and wash"—and one action on the sinner's part. The blind man did not say, "What is the use of washing?" He did not reason about it; the Saviour spoke, and he acted, that was all. It was a beautiful example of the obedience of faith. The obedience of faith is faith's obedience—the obedience rendered by faith. That word spoken by Jesus went right down into the very depths of his soul. He acted only on the word of the Lord; it was the ground of his faith. Is not that simple? If you take Christ at His word, your soul will be brought into blessing; and you will never get it in any other way. What are you staking your soul on? The hour of your dissolution may come; you will want something sure and settled *then*. Will hymns do? No; not to rest on, beautiful though they are as channels to let off the joys of the heart. It is the word of Christ you must have.

Take Christ at His word, and you will get blessing.

It is beautiful the way the man said, "I am he; *I* am the man that was born blind; *I* am the man who sat and begged;" but there was an end to all that. We never find he carried on any begging after. Of course he could see to work. But begging was in the past; he was not a beggar in the present. How simply he described his cure! But he did not yet know who had done it, or where He was to be found. He had to say, "I know not." It was a great loss to the man not to know this. He had received the blessing, but he did not know the Benefactor. How often one sees souls saved by the work of Christ, and not consciously knowing the Person of Christ! Men will look around and every way, but they do not look *up*. Now if your eyes are opened you will delight to look *up*. Scripture says, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. iv. 18.) What is your past? A perfect redemption wrought for your sins. What is your present? A perfect Saviour at God's right hand. And what is your future? You are going to "perfect day." Oh, who would not belong to Christ?

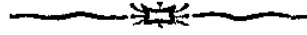
Then comes out the enmity of the Pharisees and the alarm of the parents. What a picture of the heart of man! Nothing so hinders, blights and withers up everything in the soul, as the fear and bondage of man in religious things. They were

afraid of being put out of the synagogue. Inwardly they *must* have known who had effected the cure ; but they were afraid to confess it. Who could know better than they how blind their son had been from his birth ? Many a time must that mother have wept, and the father have groaned, over that little child born blind ; and then, after long years, when his eyes were opened, were they not going to own the claims of the Benefactor ? Oh, this deadly power of the fear of man ! “ How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ? ” (John v. 44.) You are afraid of what your friends will say ; but they will not stand for you in the day of judgment ; you will be *alone* then. No, you must go on ; you must come to Christ, and go on straight after Him. The man, as it were, says, “ I cannot be anything but what I *am* ; my Saviour has made me what I am, and I must own Him.” He was not cast out of the synagogue until he had borne a beautiful testimony (vv. 30-33), delivered a wonderful farewell address. He spoke with the authority of a man who knew the Scriptures. “ If this man were not *of God* ”—that was his point, and they cast him out upon that. There was nothing else for him. He had said, as it were, “ I cannot be anything but what I am ; He has made me what I am, and I owe everything to Him.” He was a bright ray of light in the midst of Israel, and his testimony was what Jesus had done for him. “ And they cast him

out," but it brought him into the company of the Son of God.

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and *when He had found him*"—that shows how He went on to search after this man—"and when he had found him," the same voice spoke again. The only words the man had heard Him say before were, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." The next were, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and then, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." Where would you rather have been, *inside* with the Pharisees, with a religious status, or *outside* with the Son of God? They were so near, so alone together, the poor sinner whose eyes had been opened, and the Saviour who had done it. What was the man's answer? "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." He had found an Object on which his heart could rest for ever: and what was the only thing he could do? Worship. Have you ever reached such a state? Do you know that there is such a thing to be known in this world as being at the feet of Jesus, and not being able to ask for anything, but only delighting yourself in the sense of what He is, your heart finding its only relief in bowing down at His blessed feet, and saying, "*Thou art worthy*"? His worthiness so filling your soul that you lose the sense of yourself altogether; for you are swallowed up and engulfed in the love, glory, grace, and goodness of Christ.

May God in His mercy bless His word, and make Christ precious to you, for His name's sake.



WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.

It is impossible to separate true spiritual worship and communion from the perfect offering of Christ to God. The moment our worship separates itself from this, its efficacy, and the consciousness of that infinite acceptance of Jesus before the Father, it becomes carnal, and either form, or delight of the flesh. When the Holy Spirit leads us into real spiritual worship, He leads us into communion with God, into the presence of God, and then, necessarily . . . the infinite acceptability to Him of the offering of Christ is present to our spirit ; the acceptance of that sweet savour is that in which we go to Him. We are associated with it ; it forms an integral and necessary part of our communion and worship. We cannot be in the presence of God in communion without finding there the perfect favour of God in which an offered Jesus is. It is, indeed, the ground of our acceptance, as well as of our communion. Apart from this, then, our worship falls back into the flesh ; our prayers form what is sometimes called a gift of prayer, than which nothing often is more sorrowful ; a fluent rehearsal of known truths and principles, instead of communion and the expression of our wants in the unction of the Spirit ; our

singing, pleasure of the ear, the taste in music and expression in which we sympathize ; all a form in the flesh, and not communion in the Spirit. All this is evil ; the Spirit of God owns it not ; it is not in spirit and in truth ; it is really iniquity.



THE OFFERINGS OF GOD.

“ 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 to communicate forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”—Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

We often hear the verse quoted, “ Let all things be done decently and in order.” Surely it is well to bear that in mind, but I ask “ whose order ? God’s or man’s ?” In these days when man’s order has so largely displaced God’s order in divine things ; when, if I may so speak, the altar (symbol of worship) has been displaced by the pulpit, it is well to call to mind the injunction to Moses : “ Look that thou make them after their pattern which was shewed thee in the mount.” Nothing was left to the imagination even of a Moses. Is there no lesson for God’s people now in all this ? There are those who think so ; and, having prayerfully and carefully studied the word of God, have learned to discard the traditions of men and to cleave to God’s order. Such have learnt, by grace, how precious is the privilege of the sacrifice of praise and how acceptable it is to God by Jesus

Christ, which the above important passage in the Hebrews brings before us.

However, I would especially call the attention of such to the second part, which is linked to that which precedes by the closing words, "with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased."

The "BUT" is characteristic. It implies a tendency in us to go only part of the way in our "sacrifices," and to stop at the first. However, thank God for whatever He has put in our hearts of desire to be well pleasing to Him; and the being reminded of what He is looking for from us will operate powerfully in causing us to bear likewise this real and tangible fruit of our love to Him.

With this in view let us go back to a lesson in the Old Testament, viz., 2 Kings xii. 6 and following: "But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house?" and further on (ver. 9), "But Jehoiada the priest took a chest,*

* We are reminded of this chest by Luke xxi. 1 and following, in these terms, "And He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all; for all these have of their abundance cast in *unto the offerings of God*; but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

It is advisable for us to dwell for a moment on

and bored a hole in the lid of it, and *set it beside the altar*, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord ; and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the Lord. And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the over-sight of the house of the Lord ; and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the Lord."

Lastly further on (ver. 14), " But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the Lord. Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed *on workmen* : for they dealt faithfully."

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ previously

words of the Lord Jesus on this occasion. His divine approbation of the *two mites* of the poor widow is frequently reverted to by our carnal sensibilities as though we thought it to be well-pleasing to the Lord to put *into the offerings of God* a few pence ! Beloved brethren, where are we as to this ? Do we not rather see how very *rare* is this widow's offering, so highly esteemed by God, because it was *all the living that she had*. Which of us has ever once given *all the living that he had* ? Ah ! if the godly desire of this poor widow thus to take part, in spite of her destitution, in the offerings of God, was shared by us, what abundance there would be in these offerings, and also what returns of righteousness for those participating therein ! (2 Cor. ix. 10).

referred to (Luke xxi.) have put us in a line of exquisite instruction, so that from this narrative we may cull again and again.

We also have to do with the *house of God* and with the *offerings of God*. The abuses which have been committed and which are still being practised in connection therewith, we, through the Lord's grace, have come out from, and have become prudent and cautious with reference to every human means and ingenious expediency having for their object the producing among the children of God of this fruit of liberality enjoined in Scripture. But let us be careful that this reaction does not cause us to fall into negligence and indifference with regard to the requirements of the house of God. "The Lord looketh *on the heart*." He sees if the heart is devoted to Him, and if His word, directed by the Holy Spirit, has the effect of disposing our hearts to such things as are "well-pleasing to Him." Now it is He who has caused these words to be written to us, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. vi. 6).

We would go beyond the limits of our space were we to recall the various aspects of this important subject of our service towards God. We desire to restrict ourselves to a single point which we believe to be more easily lost sight of. And, as has been said, the reaction against the abuses is liable to weaken in us our responsibility with reference to the needs of God's house, and thus to

cause us to lose our privilege in participating therein.

The short verse, Mark xi. 12, gives us a lesson at once touching and sorrowful: "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, *He was hungry.*" He, the Lord! He who fed the multitudes, and who also provided for the wants of His disciples (Luke xxii. 35), *on one occasion* at least did He find no person that would trouble himself about procuring Him food for the day! This teaches us that the perfect Servant would go before His own in the narrow path along which He would call them to pass after Him. And, according to His own words, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord" (Matt. x. 24); in like manner do not the godly servants of Christ frequently find themselves similarly tested? But what say we, beloved brethren, if enjoying the teaching of the Lord by His servants, we forget to offer them the simplest necessities of life and allow them *to be hungry?* The apostle praises Gaius for having acted faithfully in all that He had done to the brethren, and to those even who were strangers who had borne witness of his love before the assembly; and, says he, "whom if thou bring forward on their journey *after a godly sort* (literally "*worthily of God*"), thou shalt do well; because that for His name's sake (corrected reading gives, "for the Name") they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 6, 7). On the other hand Nehemiah blames those whom he had

left at Jerusalem for a time, because "the portions of the Levites had not been given them" (Neh. xiii. 10), so that, he goes on to say, "the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled everyone to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken?"

It is well for us that these things are recorded in Scripture, just as we have written in the law of Moses, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? *For our sakes, no doubt this is written*: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1 Cor. ix.).

Do not let any of us, beloved brethren, be looking at others in order to disburden ourselves of these duties on them. It is with the Lord that we have to do, each one for himself, rich, poor, or those of moderate means, it is to Him we bring our offerings, it is His house; and if His house be neglected He sees it, and it is to each one of us He addresses His exhortations, and "His commandments are not grievous." "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," and if our offerings are not forthcoming or are inadequate, He sees the reason of it. He sees how few sacrifices we bring there. We would do well to ponder over Haggai i. 9; indeed the whole of that short book affords profitable matter for meditation in connection with the sub-

ject before us. We can excuse ourselves as to these charges by comparing ourselves with others, by the smallness of our means, etc., but the Lord sees how much self-denial there is on our part. And He is near to put His finger on the multiplicity of our expenses, superfluous, useless or even hurtful, which we indulge in for ourselves, while His house, and His servants are forgotten.

In conclusion, let us remember that whilst we are neglecting these exquisite instructions which the word addresses to our hearts, *it is our loss*. It is sufficient, beloved, to remind you of this, "knowing" (as the apostle Paul says to Philemon) "that thou wilt also do more than I say."

"The "chest" of Jehoash was placed beside "the altar," and likewise in the exhortation of Paul to the Hebrews he connects together in the same way "the sacrifice of praise" and "the sacrifice of doing good and communicating," as the two sides of the service with which God is well pleased. May He give us to remember "without ceasing" this precious exhortation!

Do not let us be asking: "Are there any needs? What servant of God is without the necessaries of life?" etc. Dear friends, the needs are of every day occurrence, and the instruction lasts during eighteen centuries to exercise and test our faithfulness. And if we are inattentive to it, we shall certainly lose the blessing that God has linked up therewith. Moreover God may let us be deprived both of servants and service (Haggai i. 11).

DI

THE WAY OF A CHRISTIAN'S POWER.

2 CORINTHIANS XII.

This chapter presents to us, in a remarkable manner, the way in which the power comes whereby a Christian can walk through this world. It is not merely now a path in which he can walk, but the way by which he may have strength to walk in it, and what the perfect work of God is in order to his walking in this path. Here we see the two extremes of what a Christian can rise to, and into what he can fall.

In the beginning of the chapter a man was caught up to the third heaven; he was in the highest extreme of spiritual blessedness. Such blessedness, indeed, he had been conscious of, that it was not suited to speak of when he got back into his natural state. No doubt his faith was strengthened by it for his work, but he could not speak of such things. Now there is the highest state of spirituality which you can suppose, and yet it is that which is true for us all. No doubt it was brought home to the apostle in a special manner, but the thing that he so realized is true of us. Then, at the close of the chapter, is seen the other extreme—namely, the terrible state into which a saint can get. We read of envyings, wraths, strifes, uncleanness, fornication, etc. So bad indeed was their state that the apostle could not even go to Corinth. True, they had received the apostle's reproof, and the man was

put out ; but they were so used to see evil everywhere around them, that they did not feel it. It is different with us ; for we have been brought up to feel and judge everything by a sort of moral light that has been in the world since Christianity has been professed. But they had been always accustomed to uncleanness ; they had corrected things in the main ; but still the apostle was trembling about them. "I am afraid lest when I come again. . . I shall be found such as ye would not." I shall be found very severe with you. I may come with a rod—he trembled lest he should be forced to exercise this kind of severity towards those who had not repented.

We get, then, in the beginning of the chapter, the extreme to which a Christian can go in spirituality ; and, in the end of it, the extreme to which he can go in the flesh. Such is the awfulness of the evil that remains in us, even us Christians ; and, on the other hand, the blessedness to which a man can be carried in spiritual enjoyment. Of course, it is not that every one goes up into the third heaven ; but all have the blessedness, on the one hand, of a man in Christ ; and, on the other, the incorrigible wickedness of the flesh. I do not say of a man in the flesh, for that is not a christian state at all. We see what the place of a Christian is, looked at in his privileges, and then what he is, looked at in his path down here ; how it is that a person, with the possibility of all this infirm-ty, if he is not walking watchfully, and how it is that

he can walk according to his privileges. Because here we are in a world of temptation and evil, and we have got the flesh, that the devil is always seeking to draw us aside by ; and how is a person, walking in the midst of temptation with the flesh there and the devil too, to walk according to this heavenly condition in which he has been put ? The first thing is to know what the privilege is. The apostle was made to enjoy it in an extraordinary manner ; but the place which he gives to himself is one which, in principle, belongs to every Christian. The title that took Paul to the third heaven takes all there. *We do not realize it now* to the extent that he did, but still that title gives us our place there. We are come to God in glory now ; that is the place that is given to us. And therefore he says, I do not talk about Paul—" I know a man in Christ." I do not get a man in the flesh, but a man in Christ. That is where the Spirit of God sets a Christian. It is the place of every believer. They may have great exercises of heart before getting there ; but where He sets them is not in the flesh, but in Christ. This is not the flesh, it is the glory at the right hand of God. A man in the flesh cannot be there.

Where the apostle says, " When we were in the flesh " (Rom. vii.), he means that we are so no longer ; it is a past thing. If I say, When I was in Bristol I did so and so, it means that I am not there now. In that way it is he says, " When we were in the flesh." He had had the commandment, and might

assent to it that it was good, but he could not get power through it. It was not with him then, rejoicing in the Lord always, and saying, Of such an one will I glory. But there was his very being, his nature, his walk, all opposed to God; and the consciousness he had of himself and his flesh was this: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." That is what he got the consciousness of before God. Supposing the man was desiring to do the right thing, but did not do it—rather did what was the contrary—he had the consciousness that this was what he was before God. In Romans vii. he was walking in sin and death in the first Adam, and he had to answer for it. In Romans viii. he says another thing. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." There we have the man in Christ, and "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There is the not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit, that will be seen. But where is now the power for it? "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Mark, that where he is under the law, and has got these holy desires (that which the new nature always must desire), he sees that the law is right, he consents to the law that it is good; but he also finds another law in his members, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. He sees that it is of no use. How can I stand before God? I wish the right

thing, and do the wrong thing. Am I not answerable to God? and how can I answer to Him, if I am always doing the thing that is wrong? All through this part of Roman vii., mark, he does not speak of Christ, but of man in the flesh. It was not that there were not new desires, but he did not do them; and there he was, a responsible man, having to answer for his own condition before God; and he says, My condition is all wrong. "O wretched man that I am," etc. This was true, but what was he speaking of all the time? The law, "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." It was not merely that the law judged any gross misconduct, but it required from him what he ought to be, quickening his desire and wish to be it, and yet he was not it. "I consent to the law that it is good." He has got to do with law.

Again, what does he delight in? "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." I have got a desire after what is right, but I have not got a Saviour. I have got a law, and what does the law say? You must love God with all your heart. But I do not that. Then you are lost—it requires from me what I ought to be but what I am not. It requires from a man that he should not covet; that he should love God with all his heart, and soul, and might, and his neighbour as himself. But who is the man from whom that is required? Why it is a man in the flesh, with all the lusts of the flesh constantly dragging him into

evil. The law requires from a man that is a sinner that he should not be a sinner. It is just that. If I then, as a responsible being, am under the law, what can it do? Why, condemn me—righteously condemn me. It could not do any thing else but condemn me. It comes and requires from me, when I am a sinner, to be what, as a sinner, I cannot be; and therefore a man in the flesh, if the law of God comes, is condemned. It must condemn him, because the heart is so thoroughly corrupt and bad, that the very fact of a command being given, only brings out the evil that is there. We know it by experience in our own hearts. If there was anything upon this table, and I were to say, Nobody is to know what is there, at once everybody would be longing to know what it was. This is just human nature; it is not the fault of the law at all. Supposing you have children: they may have no particular desire to go out of the house, but if you tell them not to go and put a barrier to hinder them, then comes a child that wants to go out, and, if it finds the barrier there, it will push all the harder against it to get out. The law says, I must have obedience; but I have a disobedient will. The law says, I cannot have lust; but the lust is there, and therefore the law says, “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,”—and the law of God is righteous of course in saying that. But in all this I do not get a word about Christ. I get the claims of God over man, looked

at as respon sible, as a child of Adam, when he is in his sins, and calling upon him for no sins. The effect of this is altogether condemning—I cannot get rid of it. It is not merely that I give way to certain evil things again and again ; but the tree is bad—the will is wrong. Now, this is just the contrast of what we find in Christ. When Christ comes, He says, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” And so it is with the saint in his measure. But the law being there, and the lust being there, the effect of a claim upon him is morally to bring the consciousness that, looked at in the flesh, he is a sinner in the sight of God. It shews him his real condition, but does not take him out of it, and therefore he cries out, “O wretched man that I am,” etc. He had been striving to be better, and the only result was, that he gets this experience of himself by God giving him the law, which is the standard of what he ought to be.

Then he says another thing, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He is looking now, not at how he, as in the flesh, should be better, but that another should come and take the matter up for him and go through it all. This is where the soul is brought when it is converted—when it discovers itself to be not merely a sinner but without strength. I now get the consciousness of the weakness that sin has produced in my flesh, and I say somebody must take up the work for me ; I cannot do it myself. I have the consciousness of what sin has made me in the pres-

ence of God, and I cannot get out of that condition. "Who shall deliver me?" Mark the answer. He says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is all settled. He is thanking God already. Why so? Because "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh" (the law was all right; but "what the law could not do"), "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." There I get God doing the whole thing. What the law could not do, because of this principle of sin that is in me, God sending His Son has done. Supposing I were to say to my child, "You, love me, and if you do not I will whip you;" do you think it would make my child love me? Certainly not. I should not get a bit of love from him. So with the law. The law says, Love God, but this never produces love. Commandment never produces love, nor changes the nature that does not love. What then can do it? "We love Him because He first loved us."

The law tells me that God is a righteous Judge. It tells me what I ought to be; but what does it tell me that God is, except that He will not have unrighteousness? It tells me that I am to love God, but does it tell me what the God is that I am to love? It says nothing about it. It says you are to love Him, and if you do not you will be punished. But it tells me nothing of what He is, that I may love Him.

But what does the gospel tell me? It tells me,

you have not loved God, but God has been loving you all the time. Now, that is the starting-point for the soul. God has loved me when I did not love Him. It is true that we get new thoughts and desires ; but when I am simple, the effect is, my conscience getting into the light, sees and judges all my sins in the light ; but I find that this love of God, having sent Christ, and Christ coming in the same love, God does not say, I will help you to love me, but He says, I will love you : “ What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son . . . for sin condemned sin in the flesh.” Where did He condemn it ? In the cross. Now, then, I am pardoned ; now I am free. I see the love of God, that when I had got into this terrible condition of death in sin, in the flesh, Christ has been there and has borne the condemnation. The sentence of God has been put upon it, and it is done. And that is why, looking at Christ, he can say, “ I thank God, through Jesus Christ.” When he has seen what a man is, looked at as responsible to God under the law, he says, “ O wretched man that I am.” But then he sees that Christ has been here, and done it all for him, and he can say, “ I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The man now is not standing as himself, a sinner responsible to God, because he has owned himself entirely lost in that state ; and now what he has learnt is this, that God has sent His Son, and has condemned sin in the flesh. Therefore

there is no condemnation. God has condemned it already, and thus he comes to be not a man in the flesh, but a man in Christ. That is what we get in chapter viii. He is looked at as in Christ ; he has got Christ as his life in the presence of God ; no longer as in the flesh but in the Spirit. Now he can say, I am in Christ. The second Adam, after having put away my sin on the cross, and having risen again, communicates this life to me. It is the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. I have seen this life : I have looked at Christ walking through this world, and there I see what love, what blessing, was in all His ways ; what tenderness, what patience with His disciples. There I say, that is eternal life, the life of God, and it has been manifested to me. In 1 John ii., it is said, " Which thing is true in him and in you." And now my standing in the presence of God is not in the old wretched flesh, but I am a man in Christ, because Christ is my life. This is the place in which we are set. Christ is my new life, and I am in Christ in the presence of God.

In the case of St. Paul, when this truth was carried to the highest possible realization, he was in the third heaven. The body could have no part in such a place as that. There he was, not knowing whether he was in the body or out of it ; and that is what he calls " a man in Christ." He is a man that is living, and really having his life from Christ, and united to Him in the power of the Holy

Ghost, joined to Him in one Spirit, and that not in his condition as a child of Adam, but as born of God. So that when I look at Christ as walking in this world, I can say that this is my life. I see this life in Him in all its perfectness, and I say, That is very precious. I see that very eternal life, which was with the Father, and I say, That is my life. I had a life in the first Adam, that brought in the bitter fruits of sin and corruption, but now I have got the life of Christ. But Paul could not stay in the third heavens; he had to walk in this world. But even as walking through the world it must still be taking this blessed One as our life. When I see Christ walking in this world, was there anything inconsistent with this heavenly place? Never. He was the manifestation of the divine nature down here. Now that is what you ought to be. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." I get, that is, not merely what man under the law, but what the divine nature, is, expressed in a man upon earth, and this is what a Christian ought to be. He is a man who has become a heavenly man; who has got his place in the presence of God, sin forever put away, and the Holy Ghost uniting him to Christ, and in spirit and faith in the presence of God. And now he has to act so in the world, not as in the flesh, but the flesh being there; and in trials and duties of all kinds that he has to go through he is to abide with God. If he cannot

abide with God in what he has got to do, he must give it up.

But Paul gets back to the world, and now comes trial. The flesh comes in. He had been in the third heaven; he had got this wonderful abundance of revelations, and the flesh says to him, There has not been a person in the third heaven but you. Now he is puffed up, and certainly this is not heavenly; it is the very contrary of it. And that is the way the flesh will use even being in the third heaven. He is not puffed up when he is there, because it is the presence of God, and nobody can be proud in the presence of God. Persons fancy that it makes people proud to be in the third heaven. Never! The danger is, when you get out of the third heaven, of the flesh being proud of having been there. We feel our nothingness in the presence of God. But now Paul finds that the flesh was just as bad and mischievous as ever. Wherever the flesh works, if it gets into the thought of the third heaven, it makes mischief, and if you would give a man the thought of a fourth heaven, it would only be worse. There is no mending it. And what does God send? A thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him.

There is grace, however, in this that Satan himself must be God's servant in the world, just as it was in Job's case. Who begins the business with Job? Was it Satan? No, it was God. God says to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job,

that there is none like him in the earth," etc. And then God allows Satan to bring Job to the very point where He wanted him, the discovery of what he was. Job said, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried," etc. And he had done it; this was his third heaven, and therefore the Lord allows Satan to break him down entirely. And what does he say then? "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This is exactly what He wanted. Satan had been used as an instrument of God to bring Job into the condition of being made nothing of in his own eyes, and then God can bless him. It is very disagreeable work to get to know ourselves, but very useful work. Peter is sifted, and has to learn that this confidence that he has in himself is the very occasion of his failure. In the end the Lord not only restores his soul, but makes him the channel of blessing to others. When you know your own utter nothingness, then you can go and help others. Go and feed my sheep, the Lord says to Peter. It is very humbling and trying to be made nothing of, but very useful, because we are all disposed to think too well of ourselves.

Lest then Paul should be exalted above measure, a thorn in the flesh is given to him. We learn from the Epistle to the Galatians that it was something that made him contemptible in his preaching. It

was something to keep him from being puffed up, but this is not strength. We have got the blessedness of Paul in the third heaven. We have got the man in Christ who can thank and bless God for what we are made in Christ—who can say of all of us, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” But after this we have another thing, the flesh and its inclination to be puffed up. And then we find a third thing, the flesh made exceedingly disagreeable. But this is not strength—on the contrary, it is the emptying of strength. You cannot get God to help the flesh and to help self-will. He will break it down. He will humble you by it, but He will never help it. He breaks the vessel, that we may know that the power is not of man but of God. So that he says here, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” When I am weak, I feel that I am weak. I know the truth about myself. Here the apostle was preaching, and his manner of preaching was contemptible, and yet hundreds of people were converted through it. Well, this does not come from what is contemptible ; it does not come from Paul but from God. The Lord then, when He had made him feel his weakness, says, “My grace is sufficient for thee ; my strength is made perfect in weakness.” If Paul had got strength, Christ need not have had so much for him ; but if Paul had none, the strength that came from Christ was in him. The man had been brought into conscious

weakness that the power of Christ might rest upon him.

Now there I have got, not the man in Christ, but Christ in the man, and this is what I want down here. If I think of the man in Christ, it is perfection. But when it is a question of walking down here, we want strength as well as sincerity ; we want power. If the power be in myself, there is the old man set up, and this will not do. The old man must be set down, and then another power comes in. I have got Christ with me. I am a dependent man. Christ said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We see Him constantly dependent and always right. There is what is so difficult for us. We get into mischief just when we get into independence of God. And therefore it is that we so often see a Christian have a fall, after a season of great joy. Why? Because his joy has taken him away from dependence upon God. When I am emptied of self, and am in distresses and infirmities and necessities for Christ's sake, then I can say, I will glory in them. Why? "That the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now, there is where there is to be blessing : made nothing of in one's own consciousness, but then to have the consciousness of the power of Christ resting on me. This is not the man in Christ, but the power of Christ resting on him as he walks down here—it is Christ in the man. Supposing I am emptied of self, and Christ is living in me, what

shall I get? I shall not be always in the third heaven, but Christ is always there. I have got my security there, my life there, my righteousness there, everything there that I need. Christ is my title : I am in Christ, and not in the first Adam.

The robe that was put upon the prodigal son when he came home he had never had before. It was not a patching up of his old rags, but a new robe. The best robe was brought out and given. So what we had in Adam is lost and never can be recovered, but we get a new and far higher thing. An innocent man is one who does not know good and evil. A holy man knows good, and loves it. It is not now mere innocence, but what Christ is worth in the presence of God that I have got. The robe that the father put upon the prodigal was a new robe out of the treasures of his own house, that he had never had before. God has given us Christ in heaven. I am not always in the third heaven, but Christ is there, and my place and title is to be there by faith, according to the working of the Spirit of God. If Christ is my life, there is nothing in that life inconsistent with the third heaven. The Christ that is in heaven, even when He was walking upon earth, could say, "The Son of Man which is in heaven;" and all His life down here was the expression of that. Our union with Him is a real living union. I am in Christ above, and this Christ is in me below; and there I find the principle of all my walk, and the power of it, too. I may be about my work and business, but

in that work and business I have to live Christ, to walk in the spirit of Christ, whatever circumstances I am in. Supposing I am doing that, the Spirit is not grieved, and I enjoy the third heaven ; I have not been inconsistent with it. I have not been there, but I have walked consistently with it, because I have walked in the Christ that is there. He is both my life and the power of my life. If I have been in the third heaven, and come out of it to be engaged in service, I may go on with my affections the same, spiritually and morally ; and when I go back to it, I enjoy it all the more. Take a man working for his family all day long. He may have to labour hard and away from them, but when the work is done, he comes back and enjoys them all the more. So the Christian, besides being in the third heaven, has to walk through the world. But Christ is his righteousness, his title for being there, and therefore his place is in heaven ; and, walking in the power of that life, he is back into the third heaven, as happy and fresh as ever.

We may fail in it, but this is what the power of Christ resting on us down here works in us. Mark how he speaks as regards our title to take such a place. "I know a man in Christ . . . Of such an one will I glory." In that we ought to glory. If I say I am in Christ, I glory in it. I say, What an astonishing place God has put me in ! He has taken me out of the ditch, and placed me with His Son. He takes a thief up on the cross and puts

him in the same glory as the Son of God. He takes a Mary Magdalene, from whom he casts out seven demons, and puts her in same glory as the Son of God. I am to glory in that. And what is the effect down here? That I shall be made a fool of. If you talk of a man in Christ, Of such an one, he says, I will glory; but if you talk of me, Paul, why I was going to be puffed up about having been in the third heaven! There can be no good at all for me, unless I am emptied of self. When there, so little thought was there of self, that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of it.

People may say all this is presumption. Allow me to say a word about that. Are you in Christ? If you are not in Christ, you are lost; it is no good saying it is presumption. If you are not in Christ you are lost; if you are in Christ, you are safe. What is the effect? Is not Christ your righteousness? Are you not going to glory in that, not in yourself? We do not think badly enough of ourselves as sinners in the flesh. If I know what it is to be lost—without Christ, I shall not think it presumption to glory in being in Him. I have no need to think of myself, because I am perfectly happy in the presence of God. He has made me happy by the grace that has brought me there, and by the present communion that I have with Himself in the place in which He has put me. We have to be taught practically, and therefore Paul had this thorn in his flesh. After he knew his own

wretchedness, and Christ his righteousness, there was the perfect learning of his own nothingness. This is the grand work which remains for us. We are in Christ as our righteousness ; but if I have only a light thought, this is not communion with God, though grace comes in, and there is intercession. The man in Christ has got his standing with God ; and when he has that, his business is to manifest Christ before the world. There he wants power, and the power comes, not merely from having been in the third heaven, not merely from being made the righteousness of God in Christ. He wants present power. To be sincere is not enough.

You will meet with temptation ; you will have your business, your trials of one kind and another, *and you want the power that gives Christ a preciousness to you, that makes everything you meet with to be as nothing to you.* It is Christ Himself that becomes your power—the power of Christ resting upon you. Now, I ask you, whether you can say, “When we were in the flesh ?” It is an important thing, and the apostle, speaking of it, says, “When we were in the flesh.” Have you learnt that the ground upon which you stand before God is not the ground upon which the first Adam stood, but that God has put you upon a new ground in the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ ? If so, I say, you are a man in Christ, and therefore you must walk as Christ walked. But if not, you have got a lesson to learn, to have

your souls realizing that we are lost without Christ, and, therefore, if we are to have hope of anything, it must be in Christ. God puts us in Christ ; and then I say, that I am in Christ before God. He bore my sins, and put them away—blotted them out for ever. But though there is the power of the new life and the presence of the Holy Ghost, of myself I will not glory, save in what pulls this wretched flesh to pieces ; but in Christ I will glory.

Do you desire to manifest Christ to the world? You will say you want power ; but if so, you must be emptied of self, and find Him your righteousness before God ; and His power you get in your weakness, as your power to walk through this world. Then our hearts can say, Come, Lord Jesus.

The Lord give you to know what it is to value Him now, first as poor sinners, knowing Him as meeting all your need, and then in the communion of His love, as One that is dear to our hearts, whom we long to know face to face, in all His fulness.



LAW.—Prohibition, requirement, curse.

GOSPEL.—Gift, grace, blessing.

SALVATION.—Deliverance wrought by divine power, bringing us out of one condition into another.

COMMUNINGS BY THE WAYSIDE.

“*Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them.*”
—Luke xxiv. 15.

“*Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.*”—Mal. iii. 16.

How sweet to talk of Him we love,
As on our way we go ;
Desiring much in faith and love
As new-born babes to grow.

For, ever as we speak of Him,
Jesus Himself draws near,
To shed His comfort on our hearts,
And dissipate their fear.

'Twas thus He did with those of old,
Who toward Emmaus went ;
The things of Christ—the wayside theme,
On which they were intent.

He hearkened, pitied, and rebuked
The doubtful thoughts they had ;
And did not leave them till He made
The wond'ring pilgrims glad.

Rejoicing that they'd seen the Lord,
And heard His voice declare,
That He who had been in the grave
Was now no longer there ;

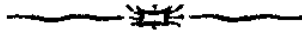
That He of whom the prophets spoke —
The Lamb for sinners slain—
Who lived, and bled, and died for them ;
Was then alive again.

Mosaic types and words fulfilled,
And David's psalms explained,

Which had to them, and all before,
As sayings dark remained.

Oh, let *us* now, who love the Lord
And in Him beauty see
In His blest company delight
As list'ning ones to be,

Waiting to have unfolded more
What much we want to know ;
More of His Person and His work
Whilst journeying here below



THE TWO DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS.

LUKE XXIV.

There are certain great principles of life—of life from the dead—of life in Christ—in which the saints of God are led out to walk to the glory of God. One of these is, “*We walk by faith, not by sight.*” In this we are at once brought to the sacred Scriptures, and to Christ of whom they testify, also having the Holy Ghost by whom the holy men of God were moved of old, by whom testimony is given to Christ and who dwells in us forever.

It does not say, *We walk by faith, and by sight ;* but, *We walk by faith, not by sight.*

The journey of the two disciples going to Emmaus has been given to teach us something of this. All God's children are taught it—it is one

of their simple actings in the life with which they are quickened.

When the rich man in hell entreated that one might be sent from the dead to his five brethren, that they might be kept from coming to that place of torment, he was refused his request, and was told, "they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them," and "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," Luke xvi. 27-31. The *sight* of one rising from the dead would do them no good if they would not *hear* Moses and the prophets, for faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God, Rom. x. 17.

While Christ walked with His disciples in the flesh, they had much of the sight of Christ, and so had the people of the world too: but the disciples were blessed by the word of Christ; and those who were not blessed by His word, were not blessed at all.

In this we see the ignorance of Christ's disciples drawing out much of His compassion to them: they were much disposed to walk by sight, but He could not suffer them so to do: they were very slow to walk by faith, but He could not conduct them in any other course.

Why did the women carry spices with them to the sepulchre on the first day of the week—the third day after Christ was crucified? Was it what He said that made them do so? or, was it what they saw, together with their own thoughts upon

it, but without any reference to a word on the matter that came out of His mouth? This it was! They *beheld* the sepulchre and how His body was laid, and then they went to prepare the spices and ointments, but they did not *remember His words*. If they had remembered His words, they would on this third day, have gone to see the empty sepulchre, and to look for their risen Lord; and the very sight of the stone rolled away would have been a joyous sight, and not to have found the body of the Lord Jesus, would have been a sight more joyous still. But the very acts by which the purposes of God are accomplished, will perplex those who have not communion with the mind of God, in those acts. They who saw His works for forty years, but did not learn His ways, could not enter into His rest; and therefore the word of warning is, "To-day if ye will *hear His voice*, harden not your hearts." Heb. iii.

But God was merciful to those poor ignorant women, who though ignorant yet were full of love to Jesus, and He sent the two men in shining garments to say to them, "Why seek ye Him that liveth among the dead? He is not here, but is risen; remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words."

And even the very apostles themselves were in a worse state than those women. God would warn

us through them that the very chief of Christ's disciples, even His chosen apostles, could not walk by sight without misery to themselves and dishonour to Him.

There are then the two disciples going to Emmaus, "And behold, two of them went *that same day*"—the day on which they should have known that Christ was risen from the dead—"to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them." The subject of their conversation was, "*the things that had happened.*" The nature of the conversation was, that they "*reasoned*" together. They told what one person did, and what another person said, and then they puzzled themselves to know why all this was so. Oh! poor disciples! Did you speak one word of what God had said in all this matter, and what God had done, and of all the glory that was now awaiting you? Oh no! And now if walking by sight has got them into their trouble, God will show them and through them show us, that it is not by sight that He will get them out of it. Objects of sight may draw out one's own thoughts; but it is by the word of God that He communicates His. As these two disciples communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But *their eyes were holden that they should not know Him*, and

yet they were about to learn more of Him. But first Christ had to cast down their imaginations ; and so He said unto them, “ What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad ? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto Him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days ? ” Jesus was indeed only a Stranger in Jerusalem, and He would make those disciples to know themselves strangers with Him there. His Father had given Him a cup, and He drank it. He laid down His life for the sheep ; and with regard to what the people in Jerusalem had done against Him, it was only that He that sitteth in the heavens might laugh, and the Lord might have them in derision. (Ps. ii.)

But Jesus drew out those two disciples by asking them, “ What things ? ” And they said unto Him. “ Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people ; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel ; and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre ; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was

alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said ; but Him they saw not." Such was their account of the things that had happened in Jerusalem, and their own thoughts about them. Jesus heard them and said, "*O fools!*" They saw what the chief priests had done, but they did not see what God had done—they were not walking by faith—they were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. It was there they were to learn Christ and the purposes of God about Him ; and so "beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." The things concerning Christ can only be learned in the Scriptures, not in the things happening in any place ; for we walk by faith, not by sight. You may truly see an important act in the workings of God, and yet be quite ignorant of the purpose of God in that act, or what further result will follow. All these must be learned of God ; and He has set them, so far as He sees we need to know them, in His Scriptures, and has given His Spirit to show Christ and the connection of the things with the glory of Christ, and this without the aid of the things of sight. "*Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him,*" because their walk was to be, NOT *by sight*—there is the exclusion of sight in our walk of faith. I dare not allow a picture of Christ, or any kind of image of Christ, that I might learn Him the better, or even look for a sight of Christ Himself after the

flesh ; it is in the Scriptures that the things concerning Him are to be learned ; and “ *the word is nigh thee*, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.” See Rom. x.

We who know the truth can have the same communion with the Father and the Son as they who saw with their eyes and handled with their hands what they have declared unto us of the word of life. “ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life ; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us ;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John i.

After Christ had reproved and corrected and instructed those two disciples, He then tested their affection for Him and their desire to have Him with them ; for when they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, He made as though He would have gone further. And as the faithful of old, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, might have had opportunity to have returned ; so those two disciples, if they had been mindful of their own sad state as they reasoned together, had now an opportunity to go back to it again, for Jesus made as though He

would have gone further ; but it was not so ; they loved His presence, they wished Him to stay with them, and so “ they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us ; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. ”

“ And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew Him ; and He vanished out of their sight. ” In this there was further witness of, “ *not by sight ;* ” for when their eyes were opened, and that they knew Him, instead of His adding something to what He had already taught them, He vanished out of their sight, and left them in happy meditation on the words He had spoken, instead of sadness in reasoning on the things that had happened. “ And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures ? ”

May we thus have communion with Christ, according to that which is written, and according to the power of His Spirit.

May we be kept from the sadness of our own reasoning on the things that happen, that we may not be as fools but as wise ; “ for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope ” (Rom. xv.).

UNFAITHFULNESS AND FAITHFULNESS.

“By their fruits ye shall know them.”

It may be asked, why put “Unfaithfulness” first? Because, alas! it is so much more common than “Faithfulness.” How subtle is self and its workings! How needful not only to start from “Gilgal” (where judgment on the flesh was carried out and the reproach of Egypt rolled away, Josh. v.—for us the practical application of the cross, see 2 Cor. iv. 10), but to return thereto, especially after any victory that grace may have enabled us to obtain. How apt is a feeling of self-gratulation to creep over the heart, and unless we are consciously in the Lord’s presence it is not detected. It is not always we can detect the enemy who may be using a friend to puff up the flesh in us, like what is recorded of the well known and (through grace) faithful preacher Rowland Hill, who, on one occasion after preaching, when a friend came up and said how beautifully he had preached, replied, “So the devil whispered to me before I left the pulpit.” Thus Satan was detected and defeated. How sad when a preacher (as alas! one has sometimes known to be the case) even when speaking of Christ and the truth, does so in such a way that the *preacher* is the prominent thing left on the mind of those listening. The following incident gives a good illustration of what I refer to :

“Two godly young men went up to London
 “(England) a few years ago, determined to hear
 “some of the leading preachers of the metropolis.
 “One night they wended their way to a well-
 “known church, and listened spell-bound to the
 “masterly discourse of its minister. On their way
 “out, they heard various remarks: ‘What a
 “great preacher he is!’ ‘What a powerful ser-
 “mon we have had!’ ‘What an intellectual
 “treat!’ And so forth. The next evening they
 “found their way to another place, and the
 “preacher took for his text the last clause of Heb.
 “ii. 10, ‘To make the Captain of their salvation
 “perfect through sufferings.’ After the meeting
 “was over, they heard one say, ‘*What* a Saviour
 “we have!’ And, further on another said to a
 “friend, ‘What a gracious Lord we have heard
 “about to-night!’ and a third one of a group ex-
 “claimed ‘What an all-sufficient and glorious Re-
 “deemer is made known to us in the blessed
 “Gospel!’ These young men wrote home to
 “their families, and gave their impressions of the
 “two services in these words—‘In the first ser-
 “mon we heard, the Lord Jesus Christ was lost
 “in the preacher; in the second the preacher was
 “lost in the glory of the Saviour!’”

But there is another thing still more painful, if
 possible, and that is when prayer is going on, and
 the one who at the moment is the mouthpiece in-
 stead of being really “inside the veil” and con-
 sciously in the presence of God and addressing

Him—attempts to produce an effect on those present. Two Scriptures come before me in this connection: “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me,” and “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire” (Lev. x. 3; Heb. xii. 28, 29).



JESUS, THOU ALONE ART WORTHY!

JOHN III. 25-36.

This appears to me to be an occasion of great moral value. John is called into the same trial as Moses in Numb. xi., and as Paul in 1 Cor. iii.

Joshua, who was Moses' minister, envied for his master's sake, when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp. But Moses rebuked him, and that too, not with a word only, but also by an act; for he goes at once into the camp, evidently (as a brother once suggested to me) for the purpose of enjoying and profiting by the gift and ministrations of those two on whom the Spirit had just fallen.

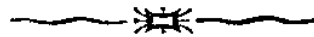
This was a noble way in this dear man of God. No grudging or jealousy soiled the fair form of his heart, or disturbed the even flow of his soul; but, endowed vessel as he was, rich and large in the gifts of the Spirit himself, he would still receive through any other vessel, though of smaller quantity, and receive with thankfulness and readiness of heart.

Paul, in his day, was summoned to the like trial. In the midst of the saints at Corinth rivalries had risen. Some were saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos." And how does Paul meet this? Does he triumph in this day of the tempter, as Moses had triumphed? Yes, only with a different weapon. With strong hand and fervent heart he breaks every vessel to pieces, that He who fills all vessels, and He only, might have all the praise. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" says he—"neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." This was victory in a like evil hour, but only in a different form, or with another weapon. But how are we to contemplate John? On this occasion he meets the same way of the tempter. His disciples are envious of Jesus for his sake. But, like Moses and Paul, he stands in the evil day, though somewhat in a different attitude. He cannot, with Paul, break to pieces his companion vessel. He cannot say, "Who then is John, and who is Jesus?"—as Paul says, "Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos?" He could not deal with the name of Jesus as Paul deals with the name of Apollos. But he breaks one of these rival vessels, that is, himself, in pieces, under the eyes of his fond disciples, and glorifies Jesus, whom they were envying for his sake, with glories beyond all their thought, and such as no other vessel could hold.

How perfect was all this! How beautiful a witness is all this method of John in handling such

an occasion to the guiding and keeping of the Spirit of wisdom! Jesus, it is true, was, in one sense, a Vessel of God's house, like prophets and apostles. He was a minister of the circumcision. Like John, He preached the coming of the kingdom. He piped, and John lamented. God spake by Him, as by any prophet. And thus He was, most surely, a Vessel in God's house, as others. But He was of a peculiar order. The material and the moulding of that Vessel were peculiar. And if occasion bring Him into question with any other vessel, as in this place of our Gospel, the peculiar honour which attaches to Him must be made known. John delights to be the instrument for this. He delights, as under the Holy Ghost, and as in full concord with the mind of God, to bring out the budding rod of the true Aaron, blooming with its fruits and flowers, and to expose every rival rod in its native dead and withered state, that the murmurings of Israel, the fond and partial thoughts of even his own disciples, may be silenced forever. (Numb. xvii.) He acknowledges that all his joy was fulfilled in that which was thus provoking the displeasure of his disciples. He was but the Bridegroom's friend. He had waited for such a day as this. His course was now therefore run, and he was willing to retire and be forgotten. Like his fellow-servants, the prophets, he had held up a light to guide his generation to Christ, to lead the bride to the Bridegroom, and now he had only to retire. He stands here, as at the end of the line

of prophets, and, in his own name and theirs, leaves all in the hand of the Son of God. And when he gets on this theme (the glories of Him who was greater than he), how gladly does he go on with it. The Spirit leads him from one ray of this glory to another ; and blessed is it when Jesus is the theme that thus awakens all our intelligence and desire. Blessed, when we can, each of us, be thus willingly nothing, that He alone may fill all things. Be it so with thy saints, Lord, through Thy heavenly grace more and more ! Amen !!



FRANKINCENSE.

LEVITICUS ii. 2.

The perfectness of Christ in all His path was that He *never* did anything to be seen of men ; it all went entirely up to God. The savour of it was sweet to the priests, but it was *all* addressed to God. Serving man, the Holy Ghost was in all His ways, but all the effect of the grace thus was in Him, was in *His own mind*, always towards God ; even if for man, it was to God. And so with us ; nothing should come in, as motive, except what is to God.

We see in Ephesians iv. 32 ; v. 1, 2, the grace towards man, and the perfectness of man towards God as the object. “ Be ye imitators of God as dear children.” In all our service as following Christ here, we get these two principles : our af-

fections towards God and our Father, and the operation of His love in our hearts towards those in need. The more wretched the object of service in the latter case, the truer the love, and the more simply the motive is to God. We may love down and love up ; and the more wretched and unworthy the persons are for whom I lay myself out for blessing, the more grace there is in it. "God commendeth *His* love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But while that is true, yet as to the state of my heart, the higher the object, the more elevated the affection. With Christ it was perfect. How can a poor creature like me be an imitator of God? Was not Christ an example, God, seen in a man? And we are to "walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." He gave Himself for us, but *to* God ; it was God's grace towards poor wretched sinners.

If we look at ourselves, we shall soon see how motives get mixed up, and things come in, even where there is right true-hearted purpose ; and that is where we have to watch. In Christ all was perfect ; all, every bit of it, as to spring and motive, was for God's glory in this world—no thought of men, as to pleasing them, but that singleness of eye which looked to God alone, though full of kindness to man—loving down in that sense, but ever looking up, with His God and Father before His eye, which made Him perfect in everything. He was, of course, perfect, could not be anything else.

Now, it is not that the priests could not smell the sweet savour, but it was not offered to them, it was all burned to God. As regards His own path, not a feeling that was not entirely to God ; for us, but to God. It was *that* which was perfectly acceptable to God.



THE MIND OF CHRIST.

I COR. ii.

The mind of Christ is what belongs to the saint as a new man. The Spirit of God first quickened, and now he has the mind of Christ, to mind the things above, as quickened out of the system of this world. He has the intelligence of Christ, through the Holy Ghost and the word. It is the communicated mind of God as it has formed itself in His purposes of Christ.

When taught of God, we shall find proportion in truth ; it will find its place. Where this is not the case, persons will overstate or wrongly apply truth, and find it will not tell. Then, in place of judging themselves, they will judge the truth, and make no progress.

In divine things, error in judgment is connected with wrongness of affection. When the man in the parable said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them ; I pray thee have me excused," it was as much as to say I prefer oxen to the supper. If a person says, I cannot

see, then his eye is not single ; he cannot justify himself *before God*. " If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Whenever we walk in conscience before God, we shall find our path simple ; having the mind of Christ, things are as clear as day.

We have in Acts xiii. an instance of the ability of applying Scripture, with the mind of Christ, to the circumstances in which they were : " Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, it was necessary," etc. In this Scripture we do not find positive particular command to Paul or Barnabas ; but, as having the mind of Christ, they could find command there and say, " for so hath the Lord commanded us" The apostle found his place with Jesus. (See Isaiah xlix. 6.)



A LITTLE INQUIRY-

What various departments of inquiry and knowledge there are in the fruitful and beautiful oracles of God ! 2 Tim. iii. suggests this. There is the devotional, the prophetic, the practical, and the doctrinal. Each of us, it may be, has a tendency to nourish our souls with one or other of these, somewhat out of due proportion. And the character of our mind will form itself accordingly, and the character of our communion also. Some of us will be known rather as orthodox, some as spiritual, some as practical, some as intelligent. Might we not pause for a moment and ask, have we been unduly feeding our souls with one or other of these meats provided in the word, to the damage of the full health of the soul ?

And can this be discovered from the character of mind which prevails among us, and from the

character of communion which our own souls have with the Lord, and one with another? I believe this would be profitable. And is it so? Is the mind and the communion which has been produced among us (let me so express it) of so marked a character that we can discover from them the food we have been living on, and the air we have been breathing?

There is a variety of character among us surely. We need not question that—it must needs be so, I might say. But still, is there not something prominent—something pervading? I believe there is, and I am disposed to express it in this way: That we have been looking more at our *social* than our *personal* standing, and cultivating *knowledge* rather than *devotedness*. The result as to our communion one with another has been marked accordingly. We find, on social occasions, very generally, points of inquiry, pointed and nice distinctions (correct, also, I allow,) taken and discussed; but the beauty and perfection of the Lord Jesus Himself, and what our souls have learned of Him, are less our material. We have been wanting in “fervency of spirit,” and have talked, and talked accurately, about truth, but have not *broken the heart over it* sufficiently.



THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Being frequently asked as to the meaning of “The kingdom of heaven” and the difference, if any, from “The Kingdom of God,” I insert the following Query and Answer taken from “The Bible Treasury” for 1866, as it gives the above points clearly and concisely:

Q. Will you define “kingdom of heaven” in it-

self, and in contradistinction from "kingdom of God"?

A. "Kingdom of heaven," occurring only in Matthew, means the rule of the heavens, consequent on the rejection of the Messiah, who is thereon ascended to heaven and thus introduces that rule, first, in mystery to faith (as now since the ascension); secondly, in manifestation (as by and by when He comes in power and glory). It differs from the larger expression in this, that, while "kingdom of God" might anywhere with truth be used substantially for "kingdom of heaven" (and so uniformly answers to it in the corresponding passages of Mark and Luke), in some places "kingdom of heaven" could not replace "kingdom of God." Hence even the latter phrase occurs in Matthew, where of course the former would not have duly expressed the idea of the Holy Ghost; and the same remark applies to Romans xiv., 1 Corinthians iv., and other passages in the Epistles where "kingdom of heaven" would have been quite improper. "The kingdom of God" could be said to be there when Christ demonstrated the power of God on earth; "the kingdom of heaven" could not be till He went to heaven. Hence "the kingdom of heaven" is never in the Gospels said to be nearer than at hand; whereas to a certain extent "the kingdom of God" might be and is said to have then come and to have been among them. The power of God displayed in miracles such as Christ wrought proved His kingdom there (and so power, not in word but in deed, the moral power of the Spirit in the Epistles); but "the kingdom of heaven" is a dispensational state of things, either true and known to faith, or actually manifested as it will be to every eye.

THE EDUCATION OF THE SOUL IN THE TRUTH.

Luke vii. 37, 38, 48-50 ; John xii. 1-3 ; xx. 1-17.

I turn to these familiar scriptures, on which our hearts love so often to dwell, beloved brethren, with but one thought, which, I think, may be traced through them ; and that is the blessed way that, in the infinite grace of our God, needs are created in the soul, in order that the truth may come with power to it. And this is surely so in every aspect of the truth. It is possessed and becomes a reality and power in us, only when received as an answer to need, first of all awakened in the soul. In these scenes, reading them in the order in which they are presented to us in the history—alike precious fruit of His grace in drawing out devotedness to Himself in those who were with Him on earth, each with its own distinct character—I think we may see a moral order bringing out the normal education of the soul in the truth, from the soul's first awakening to the knowledge of the Lord, under His blessed leading and teaching.

In the first—the woman that was a sinner, in Simon's house—we are carried back to the way God had to begin with each of us, the only way He ever became known to us, awakening the soul, by His infinite grace, to the sense of its need of a *Saviour*. And what an awakening that was when

first the truth found entrance into our souls ! How precious the grace that, however varied the way it took with us, drew us, and drew us irresistibly, into the truth : “ Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” There we found ourselves out in all our sins and ruin, but in *His presence*. The rumour (ver. 17) was true : God had visited His people. And she was at His feet, fully exposed to herself in her sins, weeping—no attempt to hide it, all come fully out, but come out in the presence of the infinite grace that brought God down to be a poor despised Man in this world. Sooner or later (if not now in the day of grace, in the day of judgment) all must come out ; but God has come, revealed in grace, before the day of judgment, to bring out the sins now, and lay the basis of the soul’s everlasting relationship with Him in the full discovered truth of my guilt and utter ruin, and by it of what God is. What mercy it is, what infinite grace ! I belong to Him, I am His ; but this founded on the discovery, deep down in the conscience, of my sins. There and thus it was He won my heart ; and the blessed way love took to do it leaves no cloud upon the relationship it brings me into : His ways with me, too, but means to this end, as we see it in His words to poor, dark, religiously-blinded Simon : “ Which of them will *love* him most ? ” He had come not merely to meet all our need as sinners, but by that need to make Himself known to us as a Saviour, and thus to draw out the affections of the heart after Himself. Blessed

expression of it in this dear woman, who, even before she knew all that grace had come to bring her, was lavishing every little token of a heart thus won upon the Person of the Lord. By such appreciation of the grace that had attracted her, she proved herself to be the one whose "many sins" were forgiven, according to Simon's just interpretation of the parable of the Lord. And now she has His own direct word to rest on for the full effect of His grace: "Thy sins are forgiven." The truth has come to her with all its own divine authority and power. The Discoverer of all her sins is God manifest in the flesh, her Saviour; His word is the warrant for her faith, and He can add: "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

So perfectly and divinely has He satisfied the first great need of the soul, divinely awakened that He might satisfy it, and formed the link of immutable relationship between the sinner and the Saviour, in the truth of what both are, fully revealed. Now the heart is set free for the next lesson in this wonderful school. Infinite as the grace is which has met our need as sinners and revealed to us the Saviour, it would be sad indeed if we stopped there: impossible, indeed, in the measure in which the heart has been really attracted to the Person who met our need. For in doing so He created new capacities in the soul, new needs, that nothing but new and deep knowledge of Himself can satisfy. This we find so blessedly in the case of Mary of Bethany. From the first, and by

the attraction of His grace, she took up her place at His feet ; it was not for anything she might get from Him, it was to listen to His word—and that ever expressed what He was (John viii. 25 *New Trans.*)—as with a heart that sought Him for His own sake, that had found its need of an *object*, and in Him the only object that could satisfy it. It is thus He leads us on. He had awakened in her heart the need of an object. In John xii. we see her satisfied, her action there the blessed expression of it.

It is deeply instructive, too, to see the effect of a heart that has made Him and found Him its object. Drawn into the current of the thoughts of God, for He was His object, she could anticipate what was passing in the mind of the Lord before He had spoken of it. It was a time of varied testimony being borne to the glory of His Person : as Son of God in the resurrection of Lazarus, as Son of David in His last public entry into Jerusalem, and as Son of man when the Greeks came up desiring to see Him. But there was that which lay nearer to His heart than taking His place in all this glory—the necessary path to it for the glory of God—it was His death. He speaks of it fully, later on in this chapter : “ Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour ! but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” How blessed it is to see a vessel prepared, as Mary of Bethany, that testimony might not be

wanting to this deeper glory of His humiliation in death, more present to the heart of the Lord. The effect of what was passing around is upon her spirit ; the scene is closing in for her if He is passing out of it. So she gathers up all that is of any value for her, represented in that pound of ointment, "very costly," and pours it upon His Person. A blessed expression, when words fail, of what her heart had found in Him as her object—divinely satisfied! "Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Thee." How blessed to be led on to know Him as she knew Him, the One who, passing by death out of this scene, has broken every link that bound the heart here—blessed preparation for the new links of association to be formed with the risen Christ in the scene where He is gone. Her heart, formed by Himself for it, has found an object in Him that fills and satisfies it, the One that by Himself alone will fill and satisfy it for ever.

But this leads us to another necessary step in the soul's progress for which it is now prepared. It depends upon the power of the attraction of the Person of the Lord over the heart, which will alone give it its reality. I refer to the new place that He has taken on the ground of redemption, as Man in resurrection, to associate us with Himself in all the perfect blessedness of it before God and the Father. This gives its character to the last scene of the devotedness of Mary of Magdala in chap. xx. The disciples having verified the fact of His

resurrection, went away to their own homes, so little were their hearts under the power of the Object of the heart of God. "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." There is created in her heart the need of a new *place*. This place—the world that gave Him but a cross and sepulchre—was no longer suited to her. It had no home for her.

But was there, then, another place where she could find one? There was. The Lord had spoken of it fully, from the very first announcement to His disciples that it was only a little while He should be with them, addressing Himself to the trouble of hearts that He counted upon missing Him in the place of His rejection (chap. xiii. 33, xiv.) He had presented this to them as the first source of comfort. "In my Father's house are many mansions." He counted upon it that the cross would change everything for them here; that the world that had crucified Him would be no longer a place to satisfy His own. "I go to prepare a *place* for you." And thus the Father's house was, for the first time in Scripture, thrown open to His people. We find in that chapter four things that enter into and make up the revelation of the place so far, for the comfort of our hearts. As even in natural things, it is the people who make the place, so it is infinitely in the revelation of the Father's house. Philip was right, therefore, so far, when he said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." But the Father had been perfectly

revealed in the Son down here : “ Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” hence the Lord could say, “ *Whither I go ye know.*” Already the first element of the revelation of the place was before them in His Person. But, secondly, “ *I go to prepare a place for you.*” This is Christ taking His place in it as Man in divine righteousness, by virtue and in the power of redemption, that fits it perfectly for us, and us for the place : until, and this is the third thing, He comes to receive us to Himself there, that we may be actually with Him. But meanwhile (fourthly) He sends down the Holy Ghost to bring all the power and blessedness of the place into our hearts, as a present thing, while we are waiting for Him. (See 1 Cor. ii. 9-12.)

How beautiful and perfect it is in the ways of the Lord’s grace, that the Gospel does not close without one at least whose heart opens to the need, and thus to the intelligence, of this very thing. There she is, with a heart desolated, as to this world, by the death of the Lord, detained by true devotedness to Him in the spot where she received the first full intelligence of the new place of wonderful association with Himself that was to result from Jesus ascending to the Father, and became the honoured vessel of the communication of it to the apostles. How blessedly He who created the need of it in her heart has satisfied her ! “ He satisfieth the longing soul.”

How far do we, beloved brethren, know this divine education each one for himself and herself—needs created in the soul to be satisfied thus? Surely we are the subjects of the same blessed love that would ever be creating longings that the truth might meet them in power, as the answer to them, if never measured by them. We know the place, and are, by the Holy Ghost having come, in the full effect of Jesus having gone to the Father, as He said: “I go to prepare a place for you.” He has unfolded it to us in those blessed words in which light first broke to Mary of Magdala: “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; unto my God and your God.” There is now, in an association and identification of place and consequent nearness never known or possible before, what was to take the place of the relations Mary and the rest had had with Jesus upon earth. All our associations with Him are now in that new place that He has taken. We know the place—it is His own—the only place He could give us, the only place we could stand in before God—won for us in divine righteousness by so gloriously accomplished redemption. Blessed it has been to our souls to know it; but how feeble is the power of it, how little are our hearts consciously in company with Him! I think it arises often from the soul passing too lightly from the first infinite lesson of His grace that awakened the need and brought us the knowledge of a Saviour and His full forgiveness, into

the knowledge of heavenly association with Himself, without the link in the divine education of the soul that we find supplied in Mary of Bethany—namely, the heart of the saved one laying hold of the Lord Himself as its object. All real progress further depended upon the measure in which this is the case with us. What was that empty sepulchre to Mary—what will give this world the character of it to us—except that the One who has lain there was everything to her soul? It was this that made the break so complete with the place where once she had had her home; it was this that prepared her for the new association with Christ and consequent relationships that make Christianity.

The Lord give us each one to know Himself, beloved friends. It is Himself from first to last, but not measured by the need that made Him real to us, by the blessed way He met it; but this only as a basis to that deeper knowledge of Himself, in which the heart is divinely satisfied forever. For “He satisfieth the longing soul.” Otherwise, instead of the power of the heavenly associations into which He has brought us with Himself, earthly things will retain their attraction and power. That is what is the ruin of us—these things retain their hold over the heart, because He is so feebly known in His excellency and glory as the heart’s object.

And yet what remains but that He who has opened the place so fully to us, and given us

the Holy Ghost as the present power of our enjoyment of it, should come to receive us to Himself, "that where I am there ye may be also." With Him as the present object of our hearts there, a link so real with all heaven's blessedness now, what joy to be only watching for Himself! The Lord grant it to us, for His name's sake.

PHILIPPIANS III.

I think it is an important thing, in these days, to avoid the natural tendency of the heart, to measure the truth of God by the expression we have of it here on earth; or even to measure the truth by the apprehension we have of it here.

We see the truth and know it; we look around at the expression of it, and then the heart fails, when we find how little the expression really answers to the object before it. The truth is presented to us by God Himself; the expression fails, and then the tendency comes in to accept a lower standard than God has given. The standard remains the same. God does not lower the standard because of our short-comings. It is always the same standard in spite of our failures, and God seeks in His grace to cause that standard to have its effect upon us. The more we are occupied with the standard, the more we shall be conscious of how we fail.

Now one mark of being in the presence of God is consciousness of failure and short-comings;

III

there is no thought in the presence of God of how far I have attained. There is satisfaction in the Object, but with that, the conscious sense of how far short we come in practice and ways and life here.

Before the soul can really look at the Object, as presented here, it must get the truth, put before it in the beginning of the chapter: "We are the circumcision;" not of it—we represent it, we are it. He is laying the basis upon which the soul can stand, and be occupied with, can gaze in simplicity and uprightness of heart at the Object set before it. The Object is Christ in glory, not Christ upon the cross: "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."

It is not gazing upon Christ on the cross as an offering for sin, but Christ in glory at the right hand of God in heaven. In verse 3 he lays the ground. It is no longer Israel. If we are truly the children of God, and have this Object before us, the sole ground upon which we can stand and gaze upon such an Object, is that given us in this verse. If we think of ourselves, and what we are, we can only go back to this verse, and the truth therein contained: God has set us before Himself as representing the entire cutting off of the old man; not an effort of the old man to turn over a new leaf; not a cultivating of the old man; not a giving of the heart to Christ; but a consenting in the bottom of the heart to this—that we represent the entire cutting off of the old man. What takes the place

of the old man? The new Man, the Christ of God, and that Christ in heavenly glory. That is the only ground upon which we can stand before God : not looking for feelings, or apprehensions, or anything in ourselves at all ; not looking even to see how far we appreciate that Object ; but gazing on that object. The consequence being that you are able to witness to that Object, you reflect that Object. It is, too, the only way in which the soul is really honest with God.

Look at Luke x., for instance. There we have a man not really honest with God, a man who comes and asks, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Tell Me, the Lord says, how do you read the law? What is your version of it? He tells the Lord Jesus, and he had read it rightly. Do that and live, the Lord says. Here the dishonest heart comes out : the man turns to the Lord, and he does not say, Who is my God? He avoids the keen edge of the word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc. When the Lord applies the word out of his own lips to him, he does not say, Who is my God? It is a heart not prepared to face the truth, and he says, "Who is my neighbour?" The word applied by the Lord Jesus cuts down to the heart and conscience ; he cannot stand it, therefore he seeks to "justify himself." He was surrounded by all the marks of who his God was, and what it was to have to do with God ; but he seeks to "justify himself." Then the Lord goes on with him, and seeks to take him up on that ground. He

comes in, in all the wondrous blessedness of divine grace, to the heart that is set to avoid the keen edge of the word. I will tell you who is your neighbour, He says. You have no such neighbour in all the universe of God as God Himself! And He has come down to you where you were, half dead, stripped of everything, robbed of everything. Here He presents Himself as come not merely to give forgiveness of sins; He takes him to the inn and takes care of him. You remember the blessed story, always so fresh to all of us. He places him at His cost for ever. He makes no bargain with the owner of the inn. He says, Whatever you spend I will repay; he is at my cost forever. On no other ground will He have to say to the man

Now, before we go back, just look, for a moment, at one who is really fit for the place we have in our chapter. Mary had the divine Object before her soul. The Lord Jesus was in Martha's house—she was occupied "about much serving." There was one there who sat at "Jesus' feet, and heard His word," and the Lord took care that she should not be interrupted. What was it she heard? Was it anything good about herself? He did not come to flatter, He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Do you know what He had come to do? That was part of what she heard. Do you know what He was Himself? That was another part of it. She heard of the goodness of God, of the love of God, we may be sure. It was bringing God Himself before her, in the delight of satisfying His own heart of love, in such a world as this; and He takes care she shall not be interrupted in hearing of it.

Do you say, there is no fruit in that occupation? Beloved friends, we must be empty vessels before

we can be full ones. The great difficulty is to be an empty vessel. We think we have something, instead of being empty to be filled with Himself and His love. I do not think it is a question of what we can do for Him ; it is the heart so taken up with Him, so kept by Him, that testimony to Himself flows out, because it cannot be kept in. It flows out because the heart is full.

Now read verse 3. That is what we are : "We are the circumcision." And then He speaks of the flesh. It is not sin now, but the religious nature that the flesh could have to boast of ; the religious man was taken up, and disposed of, because displaced by another. It is not now a religion of God's establishing, but a Person ; it is having to do with a Person ; being here in this world, simply and heartily and uprightly gazing upon that Person. The consequence is you reflect that Person. (See 2 Cor. iii. 18.)

You remember when the Lord comes to the disciples in the boat, He comes to them walking on the water. They all think they have seen a spirit, and are alarmed by the supernatural manifestation before them. He was doing an impossibility for man—walking on the waves ! Peter says, " Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water." Jesus says, " Come." Peter gets out of the boat and does the same thing, the very same thing that Jesus Himself was doing. The one, who has his eye fixed on Him, does the same thing that He does. The reflection of the Object comes simply from occupation with the Object. He looks neither to the right hand nor to the left, and he walks on the water. There is the reflection of Christ Himself. There is the testimony. There is no testimony when Peter looks at the circumstances around him, and begins to sink. Then he

says, "Lord save *me*." It is not bearing witness to what Christ was Himself, but he cries to Him, for the power that shall uphold him.

There we see plainly, I think, the two powers that are always there: the power of the Object that can produce likeness to the Object, and make the one occupied with it answer to the Object Himself. But there is another power, and that power is always ready, that hand is always stretched out—the power to save. But that is not testimony. Peter, sinking, cries, "Lord, save me," and the hand is stretched out immediately; He is near enough to stretch out His hand, and save him from sinking. The power is always in the Object, but if we are looking to the right hand or to the left, the power fails us for the time being; but the other power is always there—the power to save. It does not do to look at the effect produced, or what the consequences are—we soon then get back to be occupied with ourselves.

I do not know, whether we have apprehended what it is to be occupied simply with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and then with what corresponds to Him down here. You cannot be rightly occupied with what is dear to Him down here, unless you are occupied with Him first, and what suits Him.

Verses 8, 9, 10. Here is a man with an Object outside himself altogether. I look forward to that Object. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." We know what He has done—we should not be Christians if we did not; we must know that before our consciences can have rest—but it is *Himself* here: "That I may know him"—a Person before me. The very first step, in my introduction to Himself, is the knowledge of what He has done, and when I know

that, I seek to know Himself, the One who has done it, and the very motives, not only that actuated Him to come down to seek and to save the lost, but that actuated Him in all His life here. I see One who had the glory of God before Him, in everything He did. I cannot get near Him, unless I know the effect of what He has done. It has been to transfer me from the ground, on which I stood as a lost creature, to the ground not only of being forgiven and pardoned, but of being received and established by God Himself, in the very same favour as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Have you ever asked yourself that question: How much does God love me? Just as much as He loves the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Surely we speak of it with bated breath. We look at ourselves, we think of ourselves, God loves *me* as He loves the Lord Jesus Christ! He has accepted me in Him! Received me into that same favour, loves me as much as He loves Christ! You come back again then to the ground of grace, and drink afresh of that blessed stream. It is the sovereignty of divine love and grace that has set us before Him, in order to delight His own heart in us. Poor, needy things we may be, but He has us before Himself, that He may satisfy His own heart, in bestowing all His love upon us, that He may have, always going up to Him, the praises of those hearts that have found all in Himself. It is the having to do with God Himself.

As to myself, he says, "I count all things but loss . . . that I may win Christ." And that is the one Object, he says, I have before me now: "That I may know Him." Not, that I may go back and study His wonderful, blessed life on earth; wonderful and blessed it is; wonderful in

grace and mercy ; but that I may know Him in the power of His resurrection ; what it is now to have to do with Him who, when here upon earth, said : " I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ! " To have to do with Him who is now unstraitened in all His desires ; He has passed through it, and is now on the other side of death and judgment ; to know what it is to be taken up by Himself, at His cost, at His charge every moment of our time down here, that He may express out of such a thing as I am what can conduce to His glory.

But how soon a kind of cloud comes over that ! Something of self comes in . How soon a cloud or mist comes over it, and we turn away from it, and we look at other things, and we think things ought to be so and so, and like this, or like that. And so they ought to be, perhaps. But He knows a great deal more about it than you and I do, and He looks for subjection to His hand. He looks for us to be in His Hand, that in the midst of all these things, He may express from us and through us, what is to His honour and glory.

It is true, we are in the school, but it is a blessed school. I think, it was said, if we are not good at school, we are not good at home. Had we not better put it the other way ? The one who is good at home, will be good at school ; we must begin at home first. Here is the secret of all good conduct. In the school we are tested, the heart is tested, and failure appears, and this is the reason—we are not, in our inmost souls, right with Himself, not walking in simplicity and uprightness, not walking as the apostle says here of himself, really clear of everything but this one blessed Object before him : " That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection," and here in this world " the fel-

lowship of his sufferings." It is not possible for you to enter into the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ here, unless you "know him, and the power of his resurrection."

Let me ask, What answers to a glorified Christ? A suffering, dependent people down here! And we are content to be a suffering people here in this world. Why? Because it conduces to Christ's glory. It conduces to His glory that His people should be a suffering people in the place where He was crucified—God forbid they should be anything else! It was the ruin of the testimony always, when people began looking for something here, something that the heart could rest upon, and that the eye could see, instead of just the fellowship of His sufferings: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." Not, that I may lay hold of something, but that I may, by the grace of God, understand what He is, in His greatness, in His goodness, in His infinite love. What has He apprehended you for? To save you from hell? That is the poorest thing! It is a blessed mercy, surely, but is that all Christ died for? No! It is to have you for Himself, that He may be glorified thereby. He has laid hold of me for a purpose. We cannot perhaps express what that purpose is. We must know Himself, before we can know it; we must get near enough to Himself to know what that is, for which He has apprehended us (just as Mary could sit at His feet, and hear His word, and He would take care she should not be interrupted); letting Him pour into our souls what His blessed mind is. About *us*, and our ways down here? No! About *Himself* and His ways. Not about

yourself ; He has cut you off, and now He has taken you up, and set you before Him, that He may talk to you of Himself and His ways. There is no such blessed occupation as that.

If you look at 1 Thessalonians i. 3, 4, you see the same Spirit producing the same thought, the same desire. They are waiting for His Son from heaven. That is the one Object I have before me, he says, Christ Himself, and that I may know the power of His resurrection. The first effect of the gospel is that you become a waiting people ; the effect of occupation with Christ is that you are content to be a suffering people for His sake : waiting for His Son, and suffering for His sake. Whatever the past history may have been, that is the place we can always take through God's grace, where we can always find ourselves at home. We shall never be disappointed if we are only content to be a waiting and a suffering people with Christ ; the Object before us there—Himself, and the power of His resurrection, and waiting for Himself from heaven. If we are just content with that, we shall have no blighted hopes ; no shortcomings there, no expectations unfulfilled there, nothing to mar nor to soil. Paul was not satisfied with his own sufferings, but with the Object that led him to suffer—satisfied with Himself for whom we wait. That is the ground He sets before us ; a narrow path it may be, but a path that goes on changelessly. The difficulty is, people try to make out another pathway, and so sorrow comes in, and trial. (People get distrustful and cast down because they look for something else.) God sets before us the consequence of having to do with Christ, and waiting for His coming. If I have Christ in glory before me, I am a suffering person here, and I am content to be it, because He is

glorified by it, and I am in a world which crucified Him, and I am waiting for that blessed One who is coming.

Look at the end of this chapter. It is not isolation. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded," etc. That is the great healer of divisions, where there is singleness of heart and eye to Himself; a causer of divisions where there is not. If we are going to walk for Him and His glory, it must be simply as subject, dependent, suffering, waiting people. You say, It is a difficult path? It is more than difficult; it is impossible, unless you go back to verse 3. I must know Him and accept that ground. And if we are going to walk as dependent, subject, suffering, waiting people, that will be the great healer of all strifes and divisions, but it will be a great means of manifesting those who will not walk that way. Only, through grace, let me look straight forward.

You will find one prayer that seems to me to be always a prayer in the sanctuary: "Hold thou me up, that my footsteps slip not"—"Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." On that pathway there is no foothold for the flesh; and thus he expresses dependence upon Him who alone can hold up, but who is ever ready to do so, blessed be His name! "We are the circumcision." That is what God, in his wondrous grace, has revealed in these days; His people represent the cutting off of the flesh, and the setting up and upholding in this world, by the power, and at the cost of Another, of a people to be maintained for His glory. If we are content to be that there is no disappointment. Disappointment comes in where the heart is looking for, and seeking something, which does not conduce to His glory.

THE NEW CREATION.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 13-21.

It is blessed to see in this chapter how the thought of *God* comes out in the new creation. In this aspect man is gone as to his sins and responsibility—dead in them. The judgment of the first Adam is complete. The old thing is entirely gone. It is a new creation now, and in this new creation I find God instead of man. Even Christ Himself, as known after the flesh, is known no more. True, He was, when down here, the hope and expectation of faith as coming into the world; but the apostle only knows Him now as having died for all and glorified, all under death whether Jew or Gentile, and Christ no more known after the flesh—that is, as come after the hopes of man in it—but Head of a new creation, where all things are of God, and in which we have been made in Him the righteousness of God. God has manifested Himself in the second Man, and wrought atonement in His death, and now we are the righteousness of God in Him.

In the first creation we see man and his responsibility. In the new creation, all things are of God, and man is reconciled by Jesus Christ unto Himself. We want to have the power of this in our souls, to live as belonging to the new creation, as reconciled by God to Himself, all that belonged to the old creation for ever gone to faith,

“old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

We see how the apostle walked in the power of this in verse 13. “Whether,” he says, “we be beside ourselves, it is to God.” That is, if he were beyond the influence that belonged to him as a man, it was not an excitement that belongs to those influences, it was because he was absorbed in God. It is what is called ecstasy. When his spirit was free to rise above present service in what he was in Christ, he was lost in God, carried out beyond himself. If he were sober, if he had to weigh difficulties—come down into the sober estimate of what was before him—it was God in love working in him. His thought was entirely for others in that love. This was his daily life ; as to himself, transported with God ; and, when he did think about things down here, all his thoughts were for others. It was the love of Christ that constrained him, and he looked upon all around in connection with the death of Christ. It was no longer a living Messiah in the flesh with promises for Israel. All this was over. Christ had died, and He judged that Christ would not have gone into death if men had not been there. The whole history of Adam’s race is closed in death. If they had not all been dead, Christ would not have been found in death ; why have gone down there if others were not lying there ? And therefore those who from amongst these lived were now to live not to themselves, but to Christ who

died for them, and rose again. Thus, if he met an unconverted man, he would not think of him as an old acquaintance, and know him as such. He would look upon him as one that was dead and needed to be saved by the death of Christ. Or, if the person was a Christian, it would be just the same. He would not know him after the flesh according to an old acquaintance with him; he would look upon him as one alive with Christ, and his one thought would be that Christ might be glorified in him. Even Christ Himself was not to be known any more, in connection with this creation. He had died to it, and if any man is in Christ, he is of the new creation, where old things are passed away, and all things are become new, and all things are of God. Man is looked upon as dead, and God brings in a new creation.

We have the same aspect of truth, when in verse 19 he speaks of Christ coming in the flesh. It is not looked upon as fulfilling promises to Israel, but God revealing Himself in grace to the world. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This was the aspect of Christ's first coming, in which the apostle thought of Him. We know He came to His own, and was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers. All this is blessedly true; but here we have God in man come here, and the apostle sees neither Jew nor Gentile. If God were in Christ, He acts toward the *world*.

To what portion of it can you confine Him, if it be a question of God displaying Himself in grace in the world? For the same reason when he speaks of the love of Christ, he judges all to be dead, and sees neither Jew nor Gentile, but a new creation, in which God counts every man that is in Christ.

We know that that is God as to the glory of His divine Person, but the apostle is speaking here historically ; and therefore when he looks upon the Lord Jesus living in the world, He sees God in Him acting in overtures of grace to the world. God *was* in Christ ; that is the great fact, that God has been here as the Reconciler, and man would not be reconciled. Does the apostle say that God is reconciling us? No, but that God *has* reconciled us by Jesus Christ unto Himself and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation to the world. Specially, no doubt, the apostles, but in their measure true of all. Man would not have God when He came, and therefore he had to make Christ sin, to work atonement for us, and now He is at God's right hand, in whom we become the righteousness of God. The apostle does not say to the Corinthians, Be ye reconciled, for they *were* reconciled ; but Christ being in heaven, having gone there through death in working out atonement for us, and His presence there being necessary to complete all in glory. He must have ambassadors to carry out His work of reconciliation here ; so the apostle says, when he preaches—that is, the gospel to sinners—“ We pray in

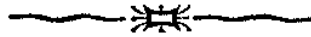
Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." That is what he had to say to men as Christ's ambassador. How far are we living thus? Living in the power of God's new creation, judging the whole thing belonging to the first creation as gone to faith, and entering into the blessedness of our place in Christ, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit? Exercised for others, that the life of Christ may have power in their walk and ways; judging evil practically in our own path through the world, but yet having our souls so full of our blessedness in Christ, of what it is to be reconciled to God, that directly opportunity arises, our hearts burst forth in praises to God, and ever go forth after others still dead in their sins. That this may be so practically, we must bring the death of Christ to judge everything in ourselves and in our ways. As the apostle says, "Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Cor. iv. 10). If we do not daily, and hourly, bring everything under the sentence of Christ's death, and judge everything by it, the Spirit will be grieved in us, and, instead of filling us with the joy of our portion in Christ, He will cause the light of Christ to awaken us to the judgment of ourselves, and of our ways.

May the Lord give us to walk in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, bringing everything into subjection to Christ, that we may know what the apostle goes on to say, "Death worketh in us,

but life in you." In thus bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, Paul found death to self, and the result was life to the Corinthians. Paul held the power of Christ's death on the natural man, so that when he ministered among the Corinthians, there was no Paul at all, but only Christ. It was life to them, because death was working in Paul.

May the Lord give us thus to live ! And may He grant us, especially in a day like this, to judge of men as Paul did, so that whatever the boast of human nature may be, we may see that all are dead, because Christ died for all in grace—for the highest act of grace and love is the proof of it—and that the only living ones are they that live to Him who died for them and rose again, while in our own souls we enter into His new creation. We may have to go down to babes, and feed them with milk, and not with strong meat ; but may we ourselves live in the light of this new creation *where all things are of God*. We must pass through exercise, and be tried and tested to learn what is in our hearts, and to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil. This is all needful and profitable, but then there is our distinct place in Christ as part of the new creation, where, instead of having the first man responsible to God, we have God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself in grace, and making Christ sin for us, to bring us into the new creation, where all things are of God, and where man is before God in divine

righteousness, and, as to his enjoyment, finding himself lost in God. It is God, and not man. It is what God is to man, and the blessedness of man being with God. God we know, revealed in Christ; but nevertheless God revealed, and man made the righteousness of God, a part of God's new creation.



“TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST.”

It is years now since I gave up letter-writing in the common sense of the word. Apart from Christ it is mere nature—in which, alas! we are too apt to live, and which must be bustling, because it has not Christ. The craving for letters is often like the craving for society, a substitute for the love of Christ. Ah! how few open the Bible with the same eager zest with which they open a letter! How few cannot live without daily correspondence with Jesus! I mean, hearty, living, personal communion with Him, such as the Song of Solomon describes.

The Bible is like a veil on the face of Christ, and when the Spirit draws it aside, we see all His beauty, and that is what makes us strong and joyous and holy. It is gazing on the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Again, I like to think of the word as a vessel which contains a precious wine. Now, there may be much to do with the outside, and the soul abide in death: but if there be but one small hole made

in the side of the vessel, with what joy we drink this new wine of the kingdom ; or as it is in Isaiah xii., draw water out of these wells of salvation ?

Now, it is to the heart that seeks Jesus that God ministers Jesus ; for it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, any more than is salvation ; though in another aspect it is only the diligent soul that is made fat. Read Proverbs ii., and also viii., for this ; also 2 Peter i., where we are told to add to faith, virtue and all these other graces. But why ? Not merely for the having THEM to God's praise and our blessing, but that we may be neither idle nor unfruitful in the KNOWLEDGE of JESUS. Ah ! that is everything, as Paul says—“ That I may know Him ”—and again, “ the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Other knowledge even about the word puffs up, but this keeps the soul like a babe on the breast of its mother, and works into us the very grace and gentleness and love of Jesus Himself. Witness Mary, who sat at His feet. And the grace of Christ is an active thing. It is not the idle contemplation of a beautiful picture ; it is the power of living for the comfort and good of OTHERS.

This is important, for many delight in the word—honestly indeed—and yet, not connecting it with Jesus, it is like manna which stinks. Why do they delight in the word ? Because it gives THEM comfort. You see the heart is not on Christ, but self. No wonder, then, that it is but as a very lovely song, which leaves only a remem-

brance of its having been heard. (See Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32). But when it is Jesus Himself we are after, He brings us into the banqueting-house, and there we hear the music and dancing, and for our life we cannot help joining in it. God would not have us to be invalids in His house all our life, feeding on our sorrows and our joys ; but like loving children, who come into a hearty breakfast in the morning, in all the gladness of His smile and family joy ; then who go out to work hard and heartily for Him all day, returning to dine, and to tell how we have sped in commending Christ by our temper and our ways and words.

There is a verse in Micah, I think—"Do not my words do good to them that walk uprightly"—which contains much truth ; and again in the Psalm, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." After all, the one thing needful is, to be near Jesus and to hear His words—everything else will follow.

I always find Christ with me in visiting IN HIS NAME. Of course it is but death if He is not one's object in visiting. I find that when Jesus Himself came into the world, people were taken up with ten thousand things in one way or another. But He came down not to be a party in their thoughts and to their views, but to get their ears open to the glorious news He had to tell of His Father in heaven. So I find that the current is so strong in most places, that if you do not go in with Christ you get weakened instead of being a help or

helped. But it is unspeakably sweet when you can go to a house in the assurance that the current of the affections and thoughts is strong heavenwards.



“THE LIGHT OF THE BODY IS THE EYE.”

LUKE XI. 34-36.

Light manifests the heart of man ; but man in his natural darkness avoids and flies from it. On the other hand, in Christ is life, and the life is the light of men. This is grace ; and where God acts according to the efficacy of grace, one becomes light in the Lord, receiving the true light in Him.

In Luke Jesus developes, in a moral point of view, the state of souls, the phases of the combat between light and darkness. He has sown the good seed, God's word ; it is perfectly adapted to the wants of man's heart. If the heart is hard, the seed does not enter, and Satan takes it away. If the natural affections receive the word with joy, without anything and because of nothing produced in the conscience, the seed springs up immediately ; but then the first difficulties cause it to wither away. Even where appearances are better, the thorny cares of this life choke its growth and hinder fruit.

It is not the quality nor perfection of the light which is in question here, as in John ; but the manner in which the heart receives it. None could deny that Jesus cast out demons, but some

imputed the power to Beelzebub ; others sought a sign from heaven. Thus the effect was that the heart manifested what was within, and betrayed its real state. All come out because the light of God is there ; and wherever it shines, it brings out all sorts of difficulties, because it forces everyone to show before God what he is. When the heart is stirred, it is like a sink. The more perfect the light, the more the effect is produced. It compels each one to take his side for or against the light. Things find their level in the presence of God. We should desire God to act with all the power of His Spirit, that those who love the light may come to the full perfection of it. If it makes our sins evident, it is that they may be put away ; for He who is light, makes also expiation for sins.

The power of Satan (vs. 21-23) seeks to keep souls in darkness. Are you then for Christ or against Him ? A middle course is impossible where He presents Himself ; the heart must decide one way or the other ; and this settles the question of Satan's power, for " greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world." (1 John iv. 4.) It is not the light which fails, but faith.

In our gospel, however, the light of the body is not that of the sun, but the eye : because the subject matter is the state of him who receives light from God, and not its manifestation in Christ. It is the eye, the organ of our moral vision ; it is the aim and object of the heart. All depends on what is really before the soul when it is a question of

seeing clearly. It is certain that all is right in Christ, and that there is enough grace in Him to cause the light to jet out. But morally the light is the eye; and it is important that the light which is in us be not darkness. It is not a question either of ourselves or of a sign from heaven. Faith is not founded on miracles: if its only basis is signs, evidences, etc., it is worth nothing; if it is not a conviction in the conscience, it is not the life of God. Christ had confidence in nothing of the kind (John ii. 23-25). "My sheep hear My voice," instead of seeing miracles, and so believing.

So with Elijah: the Lord was not in the whirlwind, nor in the thunder, but in the still small voice. As to this, one can hardly distinguish between the written word and the living Word; nothing is hidden from it. It discerns even the "thoughts and intents of the heart." It manifests God to the heart, and the heart to God. It is the soft voice that we need. There is in the heart such want as causes that the light, while condemning us, does not affright so much as it attracts.

Why was that an "evil generation"? Because they sought a sign. In presence of the light, they asked for a demonstration of the truth. The only sign given is that of Jonah the prophet--too late for that generation to be spared. It was the sign of death and resurrection; and these were realities, not signs, in the case of Jesus, because He was rejected. His rejection brings on the judgment. Jonah was a preacher without miracles to

Nineveh, that repented and was saved. Solomon, too, did no signs ; yet the queen of the south came from far to hear his wisdom. Does not all condemn that generation ? A greater than Solomon or Jonah was there. What was the preaching of the one or the wisdom of the other compared with the light of God in Christ ? In truth, it was an evil generation.

Thank God ! “the light of the body is the eye,” because we thereby judge and desire to be freed from the evil that the light discovers in us. This is the aim of God ; even as a man lights a candle and sets it on a candlestick, that people may see the light. There has never been a time nor circumstances so painful as those of Jesus. The priests were the most distant from God ; the righteousness of the Pharisees was but hypocrisy. But those who waited for redemption in Israel, owned it in the Babe of Bethlehem, and Anna spake of it to all such : God had given even them enough light for a witness to the godly.

Now it is a question of conscience. “The light of the body is the eye.” It is a matter of eyesight when seeing is the point. “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.” If a light do not manifest what you are, it is worthless. The great matter is not whether you can discern between the true and the false outside you ; but the light must enter you, and there reveal everything, unveiling your own state

to yourselves. Then there is blessing. "Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness." If there is anything for your aim but God's glory, the light is darkness. If the eye is not single it is evil. There is encouragement here : withdraw not from the light, however painful its action on the conscience. We have not to judge the word of God ; the word judges the saved soul, penetrates and holds it fast. When a man holds me so that I cannot escape, I know he is strong. "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did." The word seizes us ; the result is that we are judged and purified. God lays bare all our sin for us to get free from it ; for grace and truth are come by Jesus Christ. The truth judges, but it is grace withal. The same Jesus who sounds to the bottom of the heart all the sin that is there, has washed me from my sins in His own blood. If He stirs up all the evil that is in us, it is to take it away. The light in Him is for us always grace. The man who dreams of his reputation, in avoiding the light, avoids grace along with it. God does not leave but love us. He has imposed on Himself the task of blessing us, and of doing us all the good He can. We know that there is in us a quantity of things that the light manifests. Man, in presence of God's purity, is so unclean, that his very clothes are ashamed of him (Job ix., xlii). Why did God so press Job ? He let Satan act to manifest the evil Himself saw already. How many things there are

in us which are not of Christ, but of ourselves ! God introduces the light to bring out the hindrances to our enjoyment of communion with Himself. How much becomes a source of sorrow because it connects itself with ourselves ! If self-seeking enters the heart of a Christian, there is misery. These things must be got rid of, in order that there may be nothing between God and us : God acts to this end ; and this is the history of the Christian life. God cannot bless us in evil, whatever His blessing spite of it. But He does act in grace ; and if His action is purity, holiness, light, it is also grace. Confide in Him with entire reliance. He purifies you that you may walk so as to enjoy the brightness of His face.



NOTHING BUT CHRIST.

The Epistle to the Hebrews calls us to leave all for Christ. Whatever be the objects in which thus far we may have gloried, it is necessary to abandon them now, and to receive in their stead Jesus the Son of God. Angels give place to the Son ; Moses, the servant of the house, gives place to Christ, who is the Builder ; Joshua, the ancient captain, that led Israel into Canaan, gives place to Christ, the Captain of Salvation, who is now conducting the children to glory ; Aaron, the carnal and dying priest, gives place to the true Melchisedec, who lives and serves in the heavenly temple for ever ; the old covenant gives place to

the new, which Jesus administers; and at the same time the old carnal or earthly ordinances give place to the spiritual and efficacious ministrations of the heavenly Priest; finally, the blood of the victims gives place to the blood of Christ, offered by the Eternal Spirit.

Such is one of the principal characteristics of his divine and glorious Epistle, which thus annihilates all that in which man puts his confidence, in order to establish the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, as the object of glory and only refuge of poor souls.

But this was a doctrine hard to bear, particularly for a people such as the Jews, who had in so many ways put their confidence in the law and legal righteousness. Amongst us also at the present day, when, amidst so many religious forms, men propose with authority other foundations of confidence than JESUS, and other men blindly receive them, we have to consider carefully what are the bases of this doctrine. In these days, when all creation groans, the soul thirsts after this simple gospel, which preaches to us the perfect satisfaction of JESUS, and it is the design of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews to unfold to the eager soul the reasons for which it can thus embrace Jesus as all that forms the object of its confidence and glory. This Epistle declares what authorizes it thus to appreciate JESUS—to estimate Him as having no equal—to judge that He is in a word the *one* and *only* stay of the poor sinner.

But how does the Holy Spirit assure us of this truth by this Epistle? How does He shew us that it is our own salvation to leave every other prop in order to have none but Christ alone for our stay? He shews it to us in the only way in which it could be done—by presenting to our soul the appreciation which God makes of Christ.

That which warrants the value I am to attach to Christ is that God has already before this made known to us the worth which He possesses. If my soul confides exclusively in Him, I cannot be grounded in so doing, but by seeing the foundation of Israel's confidence at the time of the blood-sprinkling in Egypt. God had prescribed this blood, such is my divine and sure warrant, and the Epistle to the Hebrews assures it to me. It speaks to me of the high value God sees in Christ; it tells me how clearly, simply and exclusively He has laid upon Christ all that can relieve the soul. Such is the reason why this admirable Epistle lingers with so much complacency upon Christ in all His present relations with us, in all the ministrations He accomplishes for us. There is what explains the numerous quotations (chap. i.) which establish Jesus far above angels; there is what explains the glorious commentary which chap. ii. gives on the dignity of the Son of Man, the declarations of His great superiority over Moses (chap. iii.); the abundant and varied testimonies (chap. iv., v.) borne to His priesthood, supplying in quite another way that wherewith Aaron had been

honoured or what the law conferred (chap. vii.). There is the reason why He is represented as anointed and consecrated by an oath, and seated in the heavens in the midst of the sanctuary, as well as at the right hand of Majesty (chap. viii.).

In all this we have the hand of God Himself exalting the merit of Jesus, weighing Him in His dignities known in heaven and on earth. The soul is invited in the most pressing manner to come and be present at this grand work, at this divine proof of the merit of Jesus. Just so the congregation of Israel was commanded to wait at the door of the tabernacle, in order that each for himself should contemplate and know how pleased with the priest God was ; so that each, however large the congregation was, should have personally, individually, all liberty to resign himself to the care and intercession of Aaron (Lev. viii. ix.). It was a matter which concerned each individually, and the same liberty should also appertain to everyone of us individually.

The soul is a thing which concerns ourselves ; for it is written that " none can by any means redeem his brother " (Ps. xlix.) : and it is ourselves who should know the divine remedy, ourselves who should possess it. It is not a faithful brother who can hear and believe for us ; it is not a church which can represent us ; we must be at the door of the tabernacle ourselves ; we have ourselves to know the worth of Jesus in the eyes of God, and the Epistle to the Hebrews is com-

missioned to reveal this secret in the holy of holies. It is addressed, not to a certain order of privileged persons, but to us all, in order that there we may gather the blessed fruits of this ensured supply which has been stored in Him. It is not the question in this Epistle of a particular church, nor of a class of privileged persons, as is very often thought and said ; but it is the voice of the Spirit addressing itself directly to the soul, in order that it may learn to know for itself Him in whom God has placed the help which is necessary to it. In this Epistle, our soul breathes, in some sort, the perfume of the plain which the Lord has blessed, and faith breathes the perfume of Christ ; it enjoys Christ as God Himself enjoys Him, and we have the divine light in our hearts, we are converted from darkness to the light of God. In a word, God becomes our own.

There is yet another thing in this Epistle : it makes us understand in what characters God has set this exclusive value on Christ ; and these characters are such as fully answer to our necessities. The victim or the sacrifice, ix. 14 ; the priest, vii. ; the prophet or teacher, ii. 1-4 ; the captain who brings His own to glory, ii. 10 ; and in all these qualities, as in each of them separately, we see Him estimated in the most exact manner by the hand of God, and we find Him perfectly what it is needful He should be, for persons so wretched as we are. According to God, Jesus is a victim perfectly suited to purify, a priest perfectly suited to

intercede, a prophet perfectly suited to instruct, and a guide perfectly suited to transport us safe and sound unto glory. There is that precisely which we need. This Epistle traces our book of travels, in leaving our place of exile as sinners, up to our dwelling in glory, where we shall be in the companionship of Jesus. Yes, we clearly read there our rights, and we rest on Jesus as our Victim, our Priest, our Prophet, and our Guide, because God has given Him all that is possible of worth in these qualities with which He is endowed for us, and God has appreciated Him because of His work, because of His person, because of His obedience, because He has shed His blood and fully accomplished the will of God for us. There, in this Epistle, the soul may read its titles, not according to the estimate which itself makes of them, but according to that which God makes of Christ.



FRAGMENT. — To grow in the knowledge of Christ is our life and our privilege. The search after novelties, which are foreign to Him, is a proof of not being satisfied with Him. But he who is not satisfied with Jesus does not know Him ; or, at least, has forgotten Him. It is impossible to enjoy Him and not feel that He is everything ! that is to say, that He satisfies us, and that, by the nature of what He is, He shuts out everything else.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD.

“ Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” Eph. i. 9, 10.

INTRODUCTORY.

It was the good pleasure of the Godhead that all Its fulness should dwell and manifest Itself in Christ.

Such was the purpose of God, a purpose full of blessing. The way in which God is about to manifest that purpose, and in which we are associated with its blessings, is infinitely interesting to us.

In this paper only a small part of that purpose has been treated of, the outward part, so to speak, a part which nevertheless is none the less interesting.

It was designedly that God was pleased to accomplish it in a visible way, in order that that purpose might be revealed to us by means of positive truths, which, while bringing the Christian into fellowship with God, who is their source, preserve him—weak creature that he is—from substituting the wanderings of his own imagination for the holy manifestations which God has given unto us of Himself.

The subject before us is contained in the prayer of the apostle Paul, which we find at the end of Ephesians i. This subject finds a still deeper source (to which we have alluded) in what is announced to us at the end of Ephesians iii., and we cannot truly enjoy the subject treated in Ephesians i., without having felt in some measure the power of Ephesians iii.

In communicating what follows, I only respond in weakness to the desires of a few persons, and I am confident that God will deign to make up for what is lacking.

THE CHURCH AND THE JEWS THE RESPECTIVE CENTRES
OF THE HEAVENLY GLORY AND OF THE EARTHLY
GLORY IN CHRIST.

Two great objects are presented to our contemplation by the prophecies and testimonies of the Scriptures, which refer to the millennium: on one hand, the Church and its glory in Christ; on the other, the Jews and the glory which they are to possess as a nation redeemed by Christ. It is the heavenly people and the earthly people. The Son Himself, who is the image and glory of God, will be their common Centre, and the Sun which will enlighten them both; and although the place where His glory dwells in the Church be the heavens, where He has "set a tabernacle for the sun" (Ps. xix.4), the nations will walk in the light thereof. It will be manifested on the earth, and the earth will enjoy its blessings. When all is

accomplished, God will be all in all. The tabernacle of God will be with men, not coming down, so to speak, but come down from heaven.

All these things, and the way in which they will have their accomplishment, are revealed in detail in the Scriptures.

Although the Church and the people of Israel are each respectively the centres of the heavenly glory and of the earthly glory, in their connection with Christ; and although they cast on each other a mutual brightness of blessedness and joy, yet each of them has a sphere which is proper to itself, and in which all things are subordinate to it. With respect to the Church, angels, principalities, and powers, with all that belongs to heaven—the domain of its glory; with respect to the people of Israel, the nations of the earth.

We will confine ourselves here to the history and condition of the Church, on one hand; and to those of the people of Israel, on the other.

“In the beginning God created,” the Old Testament tells us.

“In the beginning was the Word,” says the New, proclaiming the foundation of a higher glory and more durable than that of the first creation, and on which was to rest the restoration of the latter, when ruined by the weakness of man and by sin.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” When they came forth from the hand of the Creator, all His works were “very good.”

Sin appeared, and they were marred (cf. Col. i. 20, with Eph. ii. 10). For a moment, God rested, so to speak, in them ; but that rest came to an end. The Scriptures say but little as to the evil which sullied the heavens ; all that we know is, that there were angels who fell. But it was on the earth and among men that the divine and wonderful work of redemption was to be displayed ; and this subject is revealed to us in all its fulness.

THE REST OF GOD IN THE NEW CREATION BY MEANS
OF THE SECOND ADAM.

The rest of God, after the first creation, was short. The rest of man with God passed away like a morning-dream. But the blessing of God was not to pass away in the same manner. That which was transient, on account of the weakness of the first Adam, was to be restored on an infinitely more excellent footing by the display of the might and power of the Second Adam ; the will of God being to head up in Him all things which are in the heavens and upon the earth (Eph. i. 10).

CHRIST THE HEIR—THE CHURCH JOINT-HEIR WITH
HIM, THROUGH RESURRECTION.

It is on this gathering together of all things unto Christ and in Christ, as their Head, that depends the character and the substance of the hope of the Church, until God be all in all. In this point of view, Scripture speaks of Christ manifested, as

being Heir of all these things, and of the Church as being joint-heir with Him. This is, as it were, the formal character which is attributed to Him with regard to all things ; that we may understand what is our place with Him. Thus it is written, that God has appointed Christ “ Heir of all things ” (Heb. i. 2) ; that, in Him, “ we have obtained an inheritance ” (Eph. i. 11) ; that we are “ heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ” (Rom. viii. 17).

This glorious title of Christ—*the Heir*—has a still more glorious origin. He is “ the Firstborn of every creature, for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth . . . and for Him ” (Col. i. 15, 16).

The Church, the children of God, are therefore joint-heirs with Christ. How are they such ? It is this which we are about to develope.

Christ receives the inheritance in His character as man, of risen man, once the “ Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; ” now the Head, the Root and Spring of all blessing.

We must first remark that the first Adam is “ the figure of Him that was to come,” of the second Adam of whom we are speaking. He is thus referred to in Eph. v. 30, 31. As Eve out of Adam, we are all taken out of Christ, in a sense ; we are quickened together with Christ when He has gone down into death, and we are set aside in the place He has taken (cf. Eph. i. 19—ii. 1, 5, 6). Just so the deep sleep fell upon Adam, and the rib

is taken, and made a woman and brought to him. Eve, who prefigures the Church, is taken from his side and God presents her to him as the help meet for him, to be his companion in the government and the inheritance of all things given to him of God in paradise.

Thus Christ, who is God as well as man, presents the Church to Himself, that it may share that glory with Him and that dominion which He already possesses in title and by the gift of God: "and the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (John xvii. 22).

Adam and Eve, taken collectively, are called Adam, as if they were but one (Gen. i. 27; v. 2) although, in a certain sense, Eve was inferior to her husband, and had come after him. So it is with Christ and the Church, who are but one mystical body.

This type, familiar to those who read the Scriptures, presents, in a most simple way, all the forms of the reality prefigured, with this exception, that the Second Adam, being "the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. xv. 47), is also the Head and Lord of the heavenly things.

ALL THINGS PUT UNDER THE FEET OF MAN.

Let us now consider the passages which speak of the dominion of man, and of the union of the Church with Christ in that dominion (but we must remember that the association with Christ,

is more blessed than the dominion which flows from it). It clearly results, from the terms in which they are worded, that their accomplishment has not yet taken place. All these passages rest on Psalm viii. There the Holy Ghost says, "Thou hast crowned him" (man, the Son of man) "with glory and honour thou hast put all things under his feet;" then He tells us (Heb. ii. 7, 8, 9), that this is not seen as yet, but that *Jesus* has been "crowned with glory and honour," that He might be pointed out to the Church as the One who, as man, is to have all things put under His feet. Meanwhile, and until the purposes of God are accomplished, until the enemies of Christ, who hold the power in unrighteousness, are made to be His footstool—in a word, during the period of the present dispensation—Christ is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high; He sits, as having overcome, at the right hand of God the Father. It is thus that He will grant to him that overcometh, to sit on His own throne (Rev. iii. 21), when He takes possession of it and reigns.

Ephesians i. 17-ii. 7 shews us the Church united to Christ in all these circumstances, according to the working of the might by which Christ was raised from the dead; chapter ii. 7 points out the cause, the glorious motive of it. In chapter i. 22 we find again the quotation of Psalm viii: "And hath put all things under his feet." The apostle adds: "And gave him to be the head over all

things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Thus, therefore, the Church is united to Christ, as a body of which He is the Head, and under whose feet God has put all things. "Christ is head over all things to the Church, which is His body." As to this character, it is as having been raised from the dead that He possesses it, as the passage itself clearly establishes.

But this last point is treated in a special way in 1 Corinthians xv., in which we find again the quotation from Psalm viii.

"Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom" [that which He possesses as being risen, which is the subject of the chapter] "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. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject" [always as Second Adam—as risen Man; for it is always in this

character that He is spoken of in this chapter] “unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”* (1 Cor. xv. 21-28.)

Christ, in His character of risen man, reigns therefore over a kingdom which He will deliver up, that God may be all in all. All this administration, and this human dominion, which is brought out in Psalm viii., comes to an end, that the glory of God, simply, may be universal.

As to the way in which these things are accomplished other passages present it to us.

CHRIST AS HEIR RECEIVES THE INHERITANCE IN THE WAY OF PROMISE.

We have seen that Christ is Heir, in title, as being Creator of all things—all things having been made by Him and for Him, as the Son; and also because He has been established such in the purpose of God. So that, God in the way of promise, all the promises find their centre in Christ. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. iii. 16). “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by

*God, but not Christ considered under the aspect of His mediatorial character. It is not said, “that the Father may be all in all;” because, although Christ delivers up the kingdom as Man-mediator, He is none the less God over all things, blessed eternally with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

us" (2 Cor. i. 20). Thus Christ is the Heir, the Seed, to whom the promise was made.

THE REJECTION BY THE NATURAL SEED GIVES OCCASION FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SPIRITUAL SEED INTO THE HEAVENLY PLACES AS JOINT-HEIRS.

As regards this earth, the people of Israel, the seed according to the flesh, were, of all mankind, in the best position to receive the Lord, in a world that knew Him not; in coming unto them, "He came unto His own" (John i. 11). That people possessed the law, the promises, the covenants, the oracles of God; it was in their midst that, according to the promise, the Lord was to come, and that He actually came. (Rom. ix. 4, 5.) It was this people which, in the midst of a lost world, possessed, through their relationship with God, the sabbath—that sign which was to remind them of the hope of Jehovah's rest. But when the Messiah appeared, although His coming was in perfect harmony with the predictions of their own prophets, the Jews did not receive Him. It is true, they said, and this rightly, "This is the heir;" but as they hated Him, they added, "Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours" (Mark xii. 7). Thus vanished the last hope of God's rest upon the earth. After all that had come to pass, God had yet been pleased to send His own Son; but this

trial served to complete the evidence that man is absolutely without any resource, and that "every man at his best state is altogether vanity (Ps. xxxix. 5).

But that only opened the way for a dispensation far more admirable, far more glorious. The earth and the people of Israel as a nation were set aside for a time; although "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The design which was hidden in God for ages past was about to be revealed (that is, the gathering together into one body, and in Christ, the remnant of the Jews and the fulness of the Gentiles, in order to bring them into the heavenly places. See Eph. iii. 5, 6, 9). The companion and bride of the One who had been rejected, but who is risen—the Church—is gathered from among all nations, while her Bridegroom is seated at the right hand of God; and she will shine forth in the same glory as Himself, when He shall appear. (Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 2.)

Christ, in His character of Seed of Abraham, is the Heir of the promises. If He had taken possession of this inheritance during His life here below, He would have possessed it for Himself alone. In fact, after He had manifested His glory as Son of God by the resurrection of Lazarus, and as King of the Jews by His entry into Jerusalem, when the Greeks came also to see Him He said that the hour was come when (in spite of the rejection of the promised Seed by the Jews) the Son of man should be

glorified ; but, as the Lord immediately adds, " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 1-24).

It was as risen that Christ was to enter into the possession of the inheritance with the Church—the ear, sprung from that grain of wheat cast into the tomb—with the Church henceforth perfectly justified. (Rom. iv. 25.) Thus Christ inherits the promises, not as having come in the flesh on earth, but as risen. He inherits them, after having done all that was necessary for the redemption of the Church, and in the power of that life which He has taken again, of which He makes His bride to partake. The result of this union is, that the souls which form the Church, when they are born of the Holy Ghost, are considered as risen with Him. In a word, Christ is Heir, in His character of risen Man—of risen Head of the Church.

Paul, in Galations iii. 17, speaks of the confirmation of the promise, made to Christ, and what he says perfectly agrees with what we have just been saying. Moreover, the apostle is quoting Genesis xxii. 18, " And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice." In these words we find indeed that the promise, made to Abraham in chap. xii., and referring to the blessing of the nations, is confirmed to the seed of the patriarch, after that seed had been restored to him in a figure of resurrection. (Heb. xi. 19.)

Thus we have seen how the Scripture establishes, under divers aspects, this blessed truth, that the Church is redeemed to be united to Jesus, in order that, when He takes possession of His inheritance, He may have a companion meet for Him, to be associated with Him in all things, and perfectly like unto her glorified Bridegroom.

For the complete fulfilment of these things, it was necessary, not only that the Church should be redeemed, but also that Christ should go to prepare a place for her.

CHRIST EXALTED IN THE HEAVENS PREPARES A PLACE
FOR THE CHURCH, AND CAN FULFIL THE PROMISES
MADE TO ISRAEL—MEANWHILE THE CHURCH
IS CALLED.

The resurrection of the Saviour had the double result of accomplishing the redemption of the Church, and of putting Christ in a place where He could secure the sure mercies of David (Acts xiii. 34), that is to say, confirm in His own name all the promises made to Israel. Moreover, it was needful also that He should take possession of the heavenly places, in order to establish the kingdom of heaven and to fill all things (Eph. iv. 10; cf. John xx. 17); as well as to associate the Church with that glory—new, and yet eternal—prepared before the foundation of the world, and yet hidden from the former ages, but the manifestation of which had been determined according to the wis-

dom of God by the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish people.

We must here distinguish two things: Christ preparing a place, a heavenly habitation; and Christ gathering from among all nations those who are to be His joint-heirs, calling the bride who is to enter into possession with Himself.

Thus, in John xiv. 2, 3 the Lord says, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

In John xvii. 24: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world."

In Romans viii. 29, it is written: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

AT HIS COMING, HE RECEIVES THE INHERITANCE
WITH THE RISEN CHURCH.

In Colossians i. 18, Christ is called "the head of the body, the Church the firstborn from the dead."

But in what manner do these things take place?—"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

“As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” These words are found in 1 Corinthians xv., where we find the subject of the resurrection exclusively treated. Thus again it is also written in Romans viii. 30, and that in reference not to sanctification, but to glory—“Whom he justified, them he also glorified;” without any mention of sanctification.

Philippians iii. 21: “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

The time when these things will be accomplished is clearly taught in Scripture. Christ is now hid in God, and our life is hid with Him there (Col. iii. 3). The present time is that during which are gathered, by the Holy Ghost, the members of His body, His joint-heirs, while *He* is seated at the right hand of Jehovah, until His enemies are made His footstool. “This man,” says the apostle, “after he had by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” “sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool” (Heb. x. 12-14). He has accomplished all that was to be done for the redemption of us, His friends; and while He is still gathering His own by the power of the Holy Ghost whom He has sent, and who reveals Him, and the Father through Him, He is seated, in the expectation of the possession—and not in the effective possession—of the earth, of creation;

until the number of the joint-heirs is completed. He is sitting on the Father's throne, and it is there that the Church knows Him at the present time.

But while He is waiting, we wait also ; and even as regards the whole creation, it waits also : it waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. As for the time and manner of that manifestation, the Scriptures are clear.

Since we are to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus, it is evident that it must be by resurrection and by glorification ; for He is risen and glorified. Therefore it is said that the whole creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God ; and the apostle adds, " And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body " (Rom. viii. 19, 23). Again, it is written. " When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory " (Col. iii. 4). " We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is " (1 John iii. 2).

THE SAINTS JUDGE THE WORLD.

We have already seen that the Lord says, " I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also " (John xiv. 3) ; and this is what will take place, either by resurrection, or by being changed ; for " we shall

not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51). This is the entrance of the Church into glory, as we are taught in detail by 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

One may read in Rev. xix. the description of this scene—the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the subsequent judgment of the earth, or at least of the heads of the antichristian revolt. This judgment is again described in more general terms in Jude 14, 15: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment," etc.; and in Zechariah xiv. 5, it is said, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."

How blessed the time when Christ shall have presented the Church to Himself, as a glorious spouse, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!" (Eph. v. 27.) Clothed with the beauty and glory which belong to her, seeing in her Lord the beauty and glory of the Father, she is moreover associated with the glory of her Bridegroom in the power of that love wherewith He loved her, and in which He gave Himself for her, that she might be perfectly cleansed and made glorious with Him, even where He is; then manifested in glory, surrounded with honours such as He re-

ceives Himself ; made partaker of all His glory, of that glory which the Father gave Him, that the world might know that the Father has loved her, as He has loved Him. Associated with the Lord of glory, the saints will judge angels and the world (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3) ; they will be the servants and instruments who will dispense the light and the blessings of His kingdom over an earth delivered of all its sorrows, and where Satan is no longer : "For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. ii. 5). "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world ('age')" to come, "and the resurrection from the dead," can die no more (Luke xx. 35, 36). "On such the second death hath no power," but they live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. xx. 4, 6). Happy thoss believers !

At the coming of Christ, these (already risen as to their souls) will rise as regards their bodies, by His Spirit that dwells in them (Rom. viii. 11). This is that resurrection—not of judgment, but of life (John v. 29)—which belongs to the Church in virtue of her union with Christ by the Holy Ghost. It cannot therefore concern the wicked ; although they also must be raised up in their own time by the word of Christ, but to be judged. Those who belong to Christ will be raised at His coming ; as for the rest of the dead, their resurrection will take place when Christ, after having delivered up the kingdom, will be seated, as Son of man, on the

great white throne, to judge the dead, when the earth and the heaven have fled away before His face (Rev. xx. 11).

Such is the teaching of the word of God. The taking possession of the kingdom by Christ is described in Daniel ; but to treat this would lead us to the second part of our subject, the earthly glory, which would unduly lengthen out this paper. My only desire here is to shew the place which the Church occupies in this scene, and the connection which exists in Scripture between that doctrine and the most fundamental and comforting truths which form the hope and the joy of the believer.

THE KINGDOM OF THE FATHER.

There is a point in this subject which has been hardly touched upon, but the contemplation of which would lead us too far away from our main object, and might expose us to the danger of losing sight of it. It is the place which the Father's love has here—a subject equally full of deep comfort. It was for the kingdom of the Father that Jesus taught His disciples to pray ; it will be in the Father's kingdom that the righteous shine forth as the sun (Matt. xiii. 43), that is, as Christ, the Sun of righteousness. It is in the glory of the Father that Christ is to appear, and that is for us a most happy circumstance in the blessedness of that great day. Here we enter into deeper waters, and yet more calm ; into that eternity which is an

unruffled and boundless ocean of infinite joy—a joy of which, however, we shall know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, which pass all knowledge; for it is there that we shall learn these things; it is there we shall study the glory. Here below we may feel perhaps more deeply what grace is; there we shall be the full manifestation of it, we sinners made like unto Christ Himself. (Eph. ii. 7.)

But the passages which have been placed under the eyes of the reader, with the reflections added, may suffice to guide those who desire to inquire further as to this simple but blessed truth, and to receive the revelation of it in their souls. They will not be long without feeling that it contains everything; that it is the fulness of Him, who, without having had a beginning, was pleased to be born, and who, having no end, is pleased to accomplish eternally in us that infinite joy, the realization of which will even render us capable of enjoying it in a measure always increasing. We shall have great lessons to learn in glory with Christ, the Lamb, in whom the Father is fully revealed. The life we have received gives us even now a right and title to all these blessings as ours.

This is only a simple outline of the position the Church will occupy, when Christ shall be revealed in His power and glory. Then will it be manifested as His bride, His companion, in the same glory with Himself; and all things will be blessed through it. For it will be the sphere and means of the display of the glory and blessing of Christ.

“AND HAVING DONE ALL, TO STAND.”

Thou gav'st Thyself for me :
Then may I stand
Steadfastly, true to Thee,
In the foe's land.

For surely Thou art worth
The standing for ;
Thou who this hostile earth
Hast trod before ;

Finding no help or friend
To be Thy stay ;
Yet faithful to the end
Of the dark way.

So may it be with me,
In these dark days—
Looking alone to Thee,
Seeking Thy praise ;

Standing for Thee alone,
Held by Thine hand ;
And having all things done,
Yet still, to *stand*.

THE ALTAR OF ABRAM.

GEN. XI. 27 ; XII. 1-7.

We are going to examine the various circumstances which furnished Abram occasion to offer his worship to God. We will also consider his walk and the character of his worship, and how he was led by faith to present this worship to God.

It is very precious to find in Genesis the elements and the broad principles of the relations of God with man in all their freshness from the creation, sin, and the announcement of the Second Adam. We also see how the government of God was exercised ; in what manner man fell ; the judgment of the deluge, which put an end to the old world ; the promises made to Abram ; the two covenants of Sarai and Hagar ; the relations of God with the Jews in the beautiful typical history of Joseph. In a word, we find in Genesis, not only a history, but the grand basis of God's relations with man. Abram in this respect holds a chief place as the depository of the promises. We may understand that by what the apostle Paul says to the Galatians (iii. 13, 14), " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree : that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

We see by this word, " the blessing of Abraham," the importance of that which is attributed to him. In considering it we shall see the position God has made for us, in His grace, as to the accomplishment of the promises ; even in looking at it as a principle, we shall understand the glory of Christ, Heir of all the promises of God. It is true that the relations of Christ with the Church were yet hidden, having been revealed only after

His death, save at least in type ; nevertheless, the various aspects of the relations of God with man, in all their freshness, and the various cases in which they have existed, are found in the germ, in this book.

In the ninth chapter, after the account of the deluge, we find that Noah, to whom the government of the earth has been entrusted, fails in his position. He got drunk. We see afterwards the iniquity of Ham, who mocked his father ; then, in Babel, the separation of the nations, each after its tongue. In the tenth chapter, men, united amongst one another, exalt themselves against God. In the midst appears Nimrod, the violent man upon the earth ; while the family of Seth, blessed in the earth, is that in the bosom of which God establishes particular relations with men. Babel presents itself, whether as the commencement of the kingdom of Nimrod, or as the false glory of those men whose unity was in Babel, and who were dispersed of God. Such are the principal features of the three preceding chapters. Noah had failed ; then the nations. Men exalted themselves against God, instead of being subject to Him ; they joined themselves together to make themselves a name, and not to be scattered ; but their exaltation becomes the cause of their dispersion.

Before we stop at the race of Shem, concerning whom God is particularly occupied, one remark is needed. A terrible principle is come up in this

state of things ! Man exalts himself in separating from God. But, insufficient to himself, he becomes a slave ; he submits to Satan's power, serves him and adores him. Having abandoned God, Satan usurps His place ; he alarms the conscience ; he takes possession of the heart and energy of man, who gives himself up to idolatry. You will find this fact in Joshua xxiv. 2, (where for " flood " read " river," i. e., the Euphrates). It is the principle of Satan's power on earth ; that adds to the history of man. Joshua furnishes us with what we add to this account of the things which came to pass after the deluge,—the violence of man, the dispersion of the nations ; namely, that even the family of Shem, these children of Heber, worshipped other gods than the true and living God. The apostle tells us they were demons : " The things which they sacrificed, they sacrificed to demons, and not to God " (1 Cor. x. 20—cf. Deut. xxxii. 16, 17). Such is the new world : Satan becomes the ruler of the one we inhabit (a circumstance we set too much aside). God can deliver us, in one sense, from the yoke of Satan as ruler, although it abides true that he can tempt us by the lusts of this world, and make us fall morally under his yoke. For example, if the Gospel be received outwardly in a country, and if the word of God have free course there, whilst in another country evangelization is not even permitted, it is evident that, in this latter, souls labour under a yoke which does not weigh in the former, and that Satan

rules over one of these countries as he does not over the other. I believe it is important in these times to discern these two things. The simple fact of being entrapped by one's own lusts is a yoke of Satan, but is not the rule of which we speak. Now, it may happen that many individuals in the enfranchised country may be more guilty ; for the very reason that they have superior advantages : but the yoke is not the same.

Independence of God is the desire of all men. Man will do his own will, and he falls into the enemy's hand. Such was the state of Abram's family, as of all other men. Into the midst of all this evil God comes, and manifests these three principles to Abram : election, calling, and the promises. He finds him in the evil, and He calls Him according to the choice He has made ; then He gives the promises to him He has called, and Abram receives them.

Besides this, we get the manner in which God does this. He manifests Himself, then He speaks. Often, in those days, He visibly did this. He came down to the earth and spoke to the individuals, and He has even done this since. Let the manner be what it may, He manifests Himself to faith, by producing confidence. For example, when Jesus manifested Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, He did so by a visible glory, and by acting on the conscience and drawing the heart. Paul says himself (1 Cor. ix.), "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

In Acts vii. 2, you will find these words of Stephen : " The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran."

God manifests Himself to the conscience : it sees itself in the presence of God ; it feels that God is there ; it perceives beforehand a judgment which is impending, and, whatever be the lack of outward manifestation, man must find himself before God, must follow Him, whereas before this he did his own will. So it happened to Saul of Tarsus : Saul had not troubled himself about God's will ; but as soon as he had heard Christ, he must enlist himself. The effect produced in the heart is expressed in these words : " What wilt Thou have me to do ?" The communication of life, we know, takes place in the soul. Also, God speaks, even though He should have manifested Himself to the sight, as to Saul. It is His word which makes itself to be heard, even when it is written ; and the written word is in fact of authority, without question, to judge what is said, though it were an apostle who spoke. The Lord Himself refers His disciples to it (" They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them"—Luke xvi. 29), and places it as an instrument above His own words (see John v. 46, 47). I say as an instrument, or, rather, as a rule ; for, whether written or from His own lips, it is from Himself.

This authority of the word is immediate. The Lord may employ Paul, Peter, John, as messen-

gers, but He wills that it be received from Himself. The word of God addressed to man, must be received on this sole authority, that it is God who has spoken it: if he does not know how to discern the voice of God and to submit to it without the authority of man, it is not faith in God; the man does not receive it because it is from God. In the natural state, the heart does not hear His voice. The principle of Abram is, that he believed God, and God puts him to this trial. There is hard work in the heart of man before the authority of God Himself is established in it.

I daily perceive more and more the importance of this. In an exercised soul which has felt that God has manifested Himself to it, which has known its responsibility, whose affection is in activity, the word has often but little authority; such a soul may have received a strong impression; God has manifested Himself, the conscience is awakened; but it does not receive what God has said in that quiet faith which, having owned that God has spoken, is arrested by His word, confides to it unhesitatingly, unquestioningly, and is found in peace.

We must not despise the first of these positions, neither must we abide in it. If I belong to God, I can no longer do my own will, and this is what God says to Abram: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred" This is neither pleasant nor easy; but hearken to what Jesus says: "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath,

cannot be my disciple." There is the grand principle. God will have a people that absolutely belongs to Him. Christ gave not Himself by halves ; circumstances may vary, but the principle is ever the same. Whatsoever be the friends, the things which retain us, we must nevertheless come to this : "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred." This order is terrible to the flesh ; it is not that we must hate our father and our mother as the flesh hates ; but it is the chain that is in one's self that must be broken ; it is from within the heart that we are detained ; it is also from that we would escape, it is with *self* that we must break. But God, who knows the heart, makes it deny itself, by making it break the ties with the world, which are outside it. "Get thee out of thy country," says He. He goes further : "And from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." Because God had manifested Himself to Abram he must belong to Him entirely.

Abram does it, but not completely. He did not at first, all he ought to have done. He truly left his country and his kindred generally, but not his father's house ; he goes no further than Haran, and stays there. He desires not, like many, to take all with him ; he gives up a great deal ; but that is useless : Terah cannot enter into Canaan. He was not called. In chapter xi. verse 31, "Terah took his son Abram, and Lot his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from

Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan ; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." We see by this verse that Terah took Abram, who did not quit his father's house, and could not make much way. The thing is evident in the eleventh chapter of Genesis ; and Stephen speaks of it in these words (Acts vii. 2-4): "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, etc., and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell." God had said to him, "Get thee out of thy father's house," but he leaves it not. Just so it happens to a heart that has not understood that it must give itself wholly to God. It gives up a great deal for duty, it receives nothing. When the question is of following God, it keeps something for itself. Nevertheless, grace acted towards Abram, but thus it is that one often plunges one's self into doubt.

The Lord had said, Get out, and come into the country that I will shew thee. Abram, not having done so, might have said, What will become of me? I have not left my father's house, what will befall me? I have only followed half-way the command of the Lord ; I have not done all that He said to me ; my heart not being in it, I have here neither the word nor the promises ; I am about to perish in Charran. But such was not God's thought. Now in chapter xii. 4, it is said, "So Abram departed, as the Lord had said to

him." All goes well, Lot goes with him ; Abram was seventy-five years old. They came not to Haran to live there, but into the land of Canaan they came ; that is to say, as to us, as soon as we will do God's will, all goes well, God takes care of everything. Before this Abram had stayed at Haran, and there was no blessing. It is only when his father Terah is dead that he goes forth and comes into Canaan. This is what we see in the first four verses of chapter xii. We may remark how God presents Himself to Abram. He does not reproach him. The obstacles are removed, he is put in the way of faith.

In the seventh verse, God appears to Abram ; it is a fresh manifestation. He says to him, " unto thy seed will I give this land." He renews the promises in a more definite way ; He had already brought him to live and walk in dependence on Himself ; now He shews him the hand and renews to him the promises, explaining to him the accomplishment of them : He will give the land to his posterity. In our case, it is heaven. God wills that we also should be blessed, walking in dependence on Him.

In the second verse, God had said to him : I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee." Verse 3 : " I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee ; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." God will be glorified, and He will bless ; two precious things, for He glorifies Himself in blessing. He en-

courages Abram in the pathway of faith, by identifying Himself with the blessing. He engages him to trust in Him ; “ those who bless thee shall be blessed.”

Thus Balaam cannot curse ; and in Jesus we are blessed. God Himself conducts us, and identifies us with the blessing of Christ. The church may be tried, may encounter difficulties ; but the blessing resulting from them is assured in Christ.

God then brings Abram into Canaan ; what is there for him there ? Nothing as yet to be possessed. The Canaanites are there—enemies all around in this land of promise. He has only his faith for his pains—not a place whereon to set his foot as properly belonging to him. Stephen tells us so in Acts vii. 5 : “ And He gave him none inheritance, no, not so much as to set his foot on ; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.”

This also happens to the church ; in the land of promise we find the wicked spirits, and we are *pilgrims* here below. Abram also was a stranger and a pilgrim. He had not where to set his foot. It is a little hard to the flesh to have forsaken all and to have found nothing. But he cannot yet possess the country. This happens to us as well as to the Jewish people : they go up into the wilderness, and find but a *wilderness*. Man must sacrifice all he loves, and rise to the height of the

thoughts of God. But thus it is that the call and the deliverance make us strangers even in the very land of promise, until the execution of judgment be come.

We read in Heb. xi. 8 : “ By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out, *not knowing whither he went.*” There is that which characterises this faith. “ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country ; for he looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” In drawing him by the path of faith and renunciation in the land of promise, God gives him nothing ; but He sets him on a position elevated enough to see the city which hath foundations.

God draws us also into the wilderness ; and, when we are there, He gives us nothing, and, if we ask for anything, He answers : “ It is not *good* enough.” The disciples would have liked to remain and for Jesus to remain ; but Jesus tells them, It is good enough for your heart, but not enough for Mine ; I would not that you should remain where ye are ; but where I am, there ye shall be also. He desires a complete felicity for His own. He tells them, before leaving them, “ I go to prepare a place for you.” For where I am, I desire that there ye may be also.

When we are come out of this world and of that which keeps back our heart, then He can re-

ceive us. When Abram was thus separated from his earthly ties God shewed him the city which hath foundations. The great principle we find here is, that these Canaanites (to us the wicked spirits, see Eph. vi. 12) not being yet driven out, we are strangers in the land; but on the other hand, Abram being in the land, the Lord appears to him.

I have wished you to observe that God begins by making the conscience act; afterwards He gives the enjoyment of Himself and of converse with Him after we have set out. There is this difference. The God of glory appeared indeed to Abram in Ur. Thus perhaps He reveals Himself to our souls, to attract them. But after that, He will have the conscience reached, and completely separates us from all that nature would retain, or by which nature would retain us, and He will have us walk as called of God and belonging to Him that the heart may thus peaceably enjoy Him, in communion with Him, when we have gone out.

God can speak to Abram, not now to make him set out, but that he may enjoy Him and converse with Him; and further, to communicate to him all His thoughts as to the fulfilment of the promises. God will bless. This is his position: he has walked with God, but as yet possesses nothing of the inheritance in the place to which God has led him. The enemies are there. But the Lord appears to faithful Abram. In the enjoyment there of this communion and hope, Abram

builds an altar to Him, who thus appeared to him.

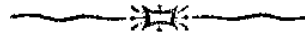
God introduces us into the position of promises, in order that we should worship Him, and He makes us understand distinctly how He will accomplish His promises. When Christ shall appear, then we shall also appear with Him in glory. We shall have all things in Him.

The portion of God's child is communion, intelligence of the counsels of God for the enjoyment of what God will accomplish. Thou shalt be a stranger, but I will accomplish My promises in giving the land to thy posterity. "And Abram builded an altar to God, who had appeared to him." His first manifestation made him walk; this makes him worship in the joy of communion in the land of promise whereinto faith introduced him, and in the intelligence of the promises that relate to it. We see God by faith, and how, by and by, He will fulfil the promise. He makes us see Jesus, true "Seed" and "Heir" of all things, and gives us the enjoyment of it in our souls.

Abram, stranger-like, goes here and there. He pitches his tent and builds an altar. It is all he has in the land. Happy and quiet he rests in the promise of God. And this also is what we ourselves have to do. Perhaps it will happen to us, as to Abram, to buy a *sepulchre* (chap. xxiii), and that is all.

The Lord give to us a like position; that is to say, a quiet faith like his who left all. God can-

not be satisfied with a half obedience, but, having walked in what God says, we may rest in His love, and have our altar until He come in whom are all the promises; even JESUS, in whom all the promises of God are YEA and AMEN, to the glory of God by us.



**“CONCERNING THE COLLECTION FOR THE
SAINTS UPON THE FIRST
DAY OF THE WEEK.”**

1 COR. XVI. 1, 2.

In the above Scripture we get a connection with the Lord's day which is worthy of notice. The apostle says, “Concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the assemblies of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him [or at home] in store whatsoever he may be prospered in, that there be not collections then when I come.” Here is a duty of love associated with the first day of the week. If it were a mere question of the saints remembering their poor brethren, there seems no reason why the collections might not have been from time to time as need was made known. Nor is it certainly a bare question of laying by at home, though it is well known that some learned commentators declare this to be the meaning of “by him” (*par' heautou*). As if it were some great matter, they tell us that “laying by him,” as a phrase taken by itself, means nothing more.

Supposing this to be certain, and I am not going to dispute with them about it, is this all? Did the apostle mean nothing more? It does seem to me that the truth greatly supplements what they say; for one may justly ask the question, Why, if so, stress should be laid on the first day of the week? Why not on any other day? Why was the collection (for this it was) on that day above all others? Beyond a doubt it is good and wholesome for a Christian to lay by at home for the need of others. It is well that he should consider gravely, and not on mere impulse or when he is on the spot, what he is going to give in the Lord's name. It is evident that the Lord meant each believer to challenge his heart in view of any prosperity he may have had in the course of the week. But that each was to accumulate a separate store in his own house from week to week appears to me the merest assumption, and indeed mistake. The apostle would have it to be a grave matter of inquiry before the Lord, and of course therefore rather a question raised at home than, as is common in modern times, an emulous act when people flock together, or perhaps at haphazard, whether they be duly provided or not, and often under moving appeals to act on their feelings. All these are but poor ways of giving, and by no means answer to the intention of the Spirit of God here for His saints on the first day of the week.

The apostle wished giving to be a grave habit, and one that should be settled, as we have been

prospered, with one's self or at home. He wished to avoid a special collection at the time of his visit, not merely, as it seems to me, because his time could be better employed than in such diaconical work, but because he felt it to be an affair for the Christian conscience and heart, not for influence of his own, still less for emulation, nor yet the gusts of some passing impulse. What a contrast is the getting a popular man to come and preach a moving sermon in order to work upon people's feelings! Far different is the principle laid down here. He urges on the saints to consider gravely before the Lord, and each by himself to lay by at home, not to act on impulse, but conscientiously, according as he had been that week prospered.

Accordingly the saints at Corinth, as elsewhere, are called in the name of the Lord to give on the first day of the week. "Let every one of you," i. e., each of them. Is this always remembered? It is not the rich alone. Is there not sometimes the thought that they are to give that can out of their abundance? Is Christ in this thought, or self? Not a word about wealth is breathed here, but "as he may have been prospered." The poor man may be prospered just as really in proportion as the rich; perhaps it might be even more sensibly. Many a rich man has nothing in particular different one week from another, but the poor man may often have; and the Lord thinks about the poor. The Spirit of God takes care to give him

who has been ever so little prospered during the week a living and personal interest in everything that is connected with the name and saints of the Lord. Certainly it is not meant that those who are always in prosperity, and may not have any special abundance, should think themselves absolved from their duty of gravely considering with a view to giving. God forbid! Thus did the Lord ordain, that the poorest might not conceive himself left out, that the simplest might know that he has an integral interest in all that concerns the glory of God. There is, too, the gracious wisdom that connects all with Christ and His resurrection, and thus with the joy and the deliverance and the eternal blessing into which we are brought, and know we are brought, and which we are intended to manifest in gathering together to His name, breaking bread in the remembrance of Him. What an association for our little contribution to the poor saints!

This then is the meaning of the first day of the week as here introduced, showing plainly that, as in the verse stated, there is a laying-up by each at home, so on the first day of the week they contributed when they came together; for we know, from Acts xx. 7, that they met on that day to break bread. Be it so, then, that the laying-up was at home, the day on which it was done implies that whatever might be thus separated to the need of the saints was not to be kept there. As they came together then, so they had fellowship in casting

their offerings into the common treasury of the church in the name of the Lord. This appears to me the point here in connecting all together. Where would be the force of pressing the collection for the saints on the first day of the week, if it went no farther than each laying by at home? Why might it not be as well done on any other day? We can see its importance if they contributed on that day what each laid by at home, when they came together to break bread. Thus was communion best maintained among those that belonged to Christ; especially as it was also for the express purpose of avoiding collections when the apostle came. He would not mix it up with personal feeling. He desired not that money should be drawn out because *Paul* was there. He would have souls exercised in love and liberty but *withal conscientious care, and the motive* Christ for the needy that are His. And He is always there; and this especially, let me repeat, on the first day of the week. No doubt withal there is liberty for every holy service in prayer, preaching, and visiting; and we may well thank God for all. But these are not confined to the Lord's day, having their place as God gives opportunity on any if not on every day; whereas the breaking of bread is the standing institution of the church's communion; and the Lord's day is the standing day for it, though it might be every day. The Lord's supper and the Lord's day answer to each other, being mutual complements in the witness

of Christianity ; and as the one is especially the expression of Christ's death, so is the other especially of His resurrection.

Thus too is all duly kept in its place and tone. For we are not meant to come together in sadness, in a spirit of mourning, or with garments of heaviness. There is set forth then the most affecting sign of our Saviour's humiliation in unfathomable love, the most solemn witness of our sin and shame and ruin. How overwhelming the evidence in His death that we were sinners, and what sinners we ! But no less is it a demonstration of our blessedness, through His infinite work, as believers. God is not only satisfied as to sin and our sins, but glorified, and ourselves by grace washed, sanctified, justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. And our Lord, though on high, *deigns to be with us* till He come again and take us to be with Him.

Meanwhile the Lord's day, where the grace and truth expressed in it is understood, and the Lord's supper, observed as it should be in its original integrity as the central institution for the gathered worshippers in Spirit and in truth, have their own appointed and appropriate aim—the best means according to God's wisdom—for the testimony and enjoyment of Christian privilege here below in His assembly to His glory. May our part, if indeed we are Christ's, be holily and happily in it all evermore. Amen.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES, ESPECIALLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE HUMAN ELEMENT THEREIN.

As the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures has been so much before the minds of Christians, and indeed of all men, in countries where Christianity is professed, and is a vital question for every soul, I would desire to notice one point in connection with it, because on it even those who are accounted orthodox have used very equivocal language. It is what is called the "human element" in it. That there is a human element is evident, for it is men who are inspired, men whose language and whose minds have been used. I say, whose minds have been used; for the apostle tells of speaking with his understanding; but the expression is used to signify *also* the defects and errors to which man's mind is liable. Now this last means man's mind left to itself, that is, *not* inspired: a very different thing from inspiring man's mind.

The reason I notice it is, that the human element is of infinite price to us, the very character of the grace shown to us and conferred on us. God's favour is not only shown *to* man, but *in* man. In the blessed Lord—the Centre and Effectuator of all grace to us—this is evident, though this is much more than inspiration, for He is a Person, the Word made flesh, yet it characterizes all God's ways with us. It is what is divine in man. It has a human element—birth, hunger, thirst, sorrow, suffering. His compassion moved by what He saw, growth in wisdom and stature, dependence in prayer, obedience, temptation (sin apart), and, when He had given Himself up to it, death (for

which indeed He had expressly become a man) ; and though now in glory, yet the human element is there also. The Son of man is at the right hand of God, and when we are in that blessed place, He will gird Himself and make us to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve us. And this last, though surely a figure, yet is a figure of that blessed love in which He took upon Him the form of a servant and became a man, and continues to exercise now, as man who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; and which He will then exercise as man to minister in perfect and devoted tenderness—fit to win and fix man's heart—divine love, where we can fully know its value in the service of that love ; for love delights to serve, and He has become a man so to exercise it. It is His glory surely ; what shows the infiniteness of divine love where angels desire to look into it ; but it is, blessed be God, and therein infinite and blessed in a human element. God shows in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace, in His *kindness* towards us by Christ Jesus. The very character given to this grace is "love . . . toward man," *philanthropia* (Tit. iii. 4). So, when He was born, the unenvious angels celebrate glory to God in the highest, in "good will towards (or 'good pleasure in') men" (Luke ii. 14). It is for us a blessed, as it is a glorious, theme. Now, though this was different from all else (for it is the Incarnate Word), yet it characterizes all God's ways with men. Inspiration (that is, the Spirit of Christ acting in the limited manifestation of God's mind in whatever degree in a man) has this character, and it is its peculiar value. It was given in various ways, as well as at divers times, dealing with man and unfolding the things of man historically in relation to God, and in moral testimony,

so that we might have God's mind about them, either according to the light which man possessed, so as to be thereby responsible, or revelations of God's own mind and judgment, so as to teach, which last was only fully revealed in Christ, who spoke what He was in His own perfection, and was what He spoke—God manifest in flesh, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

The revelation of the New Testament is different in character, because it has taken man out of the earth and up to heaven ; and hence its proper revelations (I mean after Christ's death) are the bringing in of present heavenly relations and character into earthly things. Hence, save prophecies, which are not proper to it, it is the man in heaven in all the details of life on earth—more intimate, more familiar, more present and practical. The Christian is the epistle of Christ—hence has to be formed by the word of revelation into His image, and then guided in the manifestation of it. It is evident how fully there is a human element here, not only in our realization of Christianity, but in the revelation of it ; but it is the human element taken possession of by God. Divine power, and what, if the use of the word were not liable to be abused, might fairly be called inspiration, works in everyone who is blessed in the use of a gift, and in all spiritual wisdom ; that is, God acts and forms the judgment, and the agent is only so far blessed as this is the case. But this, Scripture carefully distinguishes from inspiration in the sense we now use it in, viz., communications having a divine authority over the soul, because given by God Himself. An inspired man may say, "I have received mercy of the Lord to be found faithful ;" "I think also that I have the Spirit of God ;" and add, "The married I com-

mand, not I, but the Lord ;” “ to the rest speak I, not the Lord.” Thus the apostle carefully distinguishes the sound and godly wisdom which he had experimentally by the Spirit—the action of the Holy Ghost in his own mind morally—from what he had from the Lord Himself, so as to give it as His command. This has been stupidly alleged as showing all was not inspired, since part was distinguished as spiritual experience. But this is a mistake as to the whole nature of inspiration, and leads me to some notice of this.

The truth of inspiration is not that all that is stated or recorded as done or spoken was inspired. We have the devil's words, and wicked men's words, and holy, but failing, men's words ; but in such cases the writer was inspired to give us these things as he has given them. So God, knowing our liability to be misled as to inspiration, has inspired Paul to record the difference between the highest spiritual wisdom and apprehension, and inspiration. There cannot be on this point a more important inspired testimony. It decides the question recently raised, and judges the error into which presumptuous men have fallen. The operation of the Spirit forming and leading men's minds is not inspiration in the proper sense of the word. Now the forms and bearings of inspiration are various, though the source and the authority be one, because there is a human element. God's works have to be revealed, and they are so by a simple and blessed statement of them, such as nothing but inspiration could give. Man's failure and sin has to be traced and brought to light in its origin and its development. For this latter, God's ways had to be revealed ; but this had a double character, the history of the facts in connection with which these ways were manifested,

and the dealings of God in which they were expressed.

Thus we have the history of Abraham; but, to get his place, I must have the judgment of man at Babel after the flood, and the formation of nations and languages, out of which he is called by God's glory. Then promise, calling, separation from the world, come out to view as a root principle. But was Abraham to be only a pillar to hang these principles on? No; he was a living man, who acted by faith as called out, and trusted in God as to the promises. God reveals Himself in both these ways. He is the Almighty (Shaddai) for the present path of faith, but the revealer of the promises, so as to open the wide history of His purposes as to Israel, and His grace for all nations. Man, let me say, would have been perfectly incapable of connecting these things in one history of a man, yet so as they bear in principle of walk and purpose on the whole present history of the world, Jew and Gentile, and how those who look to God are blessed with believing Abraham. But in all this there is a human element, because the thing to be taught is God's relationship with man: how they subsist on His part, how they subsist on man's part. Promise is God's, but it is not for man connected with man, with human state and hopes, even if these go on to heaven, still more clearly if they are on earth. Faith, though of and in God, yet is in man, may be exercised and shine brightly and perfectly, or may fail, so that man is shown. Now all this is the revelation. It traces an ordinary, or it may be an extraordinary, history, in which all this (and far more than this) is brought out. But who could do this so as to instruct us in all these ways of God, whose full import is only brought to light in the New Testament, where the

true light shines (save God, who knows what He meant to teach us, and what to teach us by)?

Could Moses or (as these infatuated rationalists would tell us) some fraudulent impostors in Josiah's reign, have known all that would serve as a principle for all ages, and a root and foreshadowing of purpose not even yet all fully brought out? Yet Moses must give the history as a series of facts that then happened (useful to Israel at the time, needful to their understanding their place before God, and a ground of confidence in Him), clothing it in apprehensions and feelings which should do this, and as entering in heart into it, and using it this way himself. That is, the human element is found in the revelation, is essential to it, if it is to act in, on, and by, the heart of man; but it is God's taking possession of it, and using it for the purposes of His own grace (and these cannot be greater, save the perfection of it all in Christ). Must not faith have a human element in it?

Now all communications of the word are not faith, though implicitly in them; but in a very large part, the historical part, it is in many things the exercise and expression of faith, or it would have no value. It is impossible to separate it from the revelation. When we read (Ex. xxxii), "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants," is it not a revelation? It is the turning-point of the whole matter, casting God, so to speak, on promise, and not on judgment, by the blessed faith and true-heartedness of His servant, (a principle on which all human hope hangs, on which Galatians is founded, yea, on which our hope of heaven itself is founded); yet is there not a human element? Is it not Moses' faith and grace, and blessed self-denying devotedness to God's glory and His people's blessing? Am not I

divinely taught by it how grace works in a man withal? Yet if I have it not from God, of what account is it? Nay, the very fact of all this being a history, the part where man seems to enter most specially requires that it should be inspired of God, that it may have the elements which will divinely instruct me. The very value of it is, that I have divinely given instruction in the scene and sphere of man.

And, take the other side: if I am to learn what man is truly, and what God's ways of dealing with him are, is it to be *only in dogmas settled in a council*, as dry and inoperative as the great Sahara? Or am I to get them where all passes among living men with the living God? God has in His wisdom chosen the latter; but then to learn by, I must get it truly, the faults, failures, shortcomings, sins, mixed actions and motives—in short, what man is as he is before God and with God. I must have the facts really, but according to the mind of God, or I shall not learn that mind by them at all—the evil as it came, as it was pardoned, was judged, bore fruit of sorrow afterwards, and the like.

I may be told, You are confounding what we just distinguished, the record, and the thing recorded. No: here the record (though not always, for we have God's words in the thing recorded) is the revelation in a large part of it; the word is perfect, and must be to be of any use; but there is more than that. The things pass according to, and make a part of, man's then relationship with God; praise, for example, say at the Red Sea. Had Moses and Israel praised then according to our heavenly notions now, all would have been out of place; they praise according to their then state. All this is revealed as history in the

same spirit. It is not a commentary on it, but a history of it. There is the human element ; yet that is the very means of my getting the divine instruction, both as to principles and as a fore-shadowed future (for they happened to them for types, and are *written* for our instruction on whom the ends of the world are come, 1 Cor. x. 11), and as to God's patient gracious dealing with man, on from the beginning, when he had fallen. If I find promise precede law, yet law came in to raise the question of righteousness ; and then, man being fully convinced of sin, He who was the object of promise became our righteousness in a divine way. I get a taking up the history in a divine way for eternal principles of truth ; but I get besides in the history, an instruction as to what man is under God's dealings, acting on my heart and conscience as it never could have done, had the human element not been there. It is the whole value of the history and its revelation. But take away the divine use of the human element and all is lost, and worse ; for I have a history to teach me erroneously.

Let us remember the simple principle, that God's entering into man and using the human element for His service is just the opposite to His leaving a man to his own thoughts and mental appreciations, which is what is meant by the human element when unbelief talks of it ; and the history is not only man's history, but a man's history of it. But it is man's history so as to bring out fully what he is with God and under God's dealings, so as to teach all men by it and in all ages, and fore-shadow things to come ; and hence a divinely given history of it all, yet with the historian entering into it all as a living history in which the people and himself were interested, or it would

not have been reality then nor now. I speak of facts ; I read it, see Moses in a large part of it acting, feeling, thinking, speaking, praising; nor can I separate, nor do I desire to separate, the account given from the reality of the thoughts and feelings of him who recounts it. Nor, if it be Abraham and other history, is there any *real* difference, though the proof be less apparent ; for in both it is the Holy Ghost recounting by man what passed in and with man. Only, when of other persons, the interest of Moses or the sacred historian in them is less evident ; but I believe Moses' heart and interest went with Abraham's history as much as with his own, as much as when he said, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you."

Hence we have, in the history by various persons, the distinct succession of all the ways and dealings of God from one mind, ascertained from a history in which the individual writers had (for the most part could have) no knowledge of the whole scheme itself. Innocence, man without law and lawless, promise coming in as a thing apart, man under law, under priesthood, obedient royalty with law, sovereign unlimited royalty over the world, prophets to recall to law and to foretell the coming One and judgments, and at last the Seed of promise, grace in the world—this is history, history as it appears in fact in Scripture, yet principles of dealing with man which test him morally in every way, and bring out the whole state in which he is, in which I am, before God ; yet the connection of one part with another no one of the writers could have had in his mind, or does not refer to. All is man ; but all is man brought out by God's dealings, and the record given of it by man, as interested in it as the history of his

own people, or what led to it from the creation onward, but as the people beloved of God in whom God displayed His ways, and as a whole of which no one man was author—a divine exhibition of what man was, and God's ways with him.

This leads me to another remark: that to understand such a revelation the purpose of God must be known. The Holy Ghost must act in us to enable us to understand these things. Here He works in connection with the moral state of man, and we have degrees of spiritual apprehension. Where Scripture was given or used by scriptural writers, there I get the divine account I have to understand. Nor should I trouble myself with it as divine instructions if it be not so; perfectly given to be an object adequate to afford God's mind and ways, prophetic declarations, and christian absolute truth furnishing a key to it all. The holy Scriptures are given by inspiration of God, and are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Divine light is needed, as every Christian knows, in us, in order to understand them. (See Luke xxiv. 45 and 1 Cor. ii. 14—passages on which I might insist, were I speaking generally on inspiration: my object is now the human element).

This purpose is constantly overlooked—we are liable to mistake in it; for this is a question of spiritual understanding, and depends directly on our moral state. Such as are meek, them shall He guide in judgment. God hides these things from wise and prudent, and reveals them to babes. Thus in a celebrated infidel attack on Scripture, the question raised was as to the historical character of the Pentateuch. Now Genesis is historical; that is, it so far takes the facts of history as are sufficient to establish all the great

principles of God's government of the world, and His purposes concerning it, taking Abraham's seed as a centre.

So the beginning of Exodus is historical, but to give us the great principle of a divine redemption with its effects (unknown till then) of God's dwelling with men, and of holiness to God. After that the great body of it is not historical at all. We gather elsewhere that the ordinances of God were neglected. No child was circumcised. They took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their God Remphan. No doubt some pious ones may have kept them, but neither is this recorded. It was not the object. After their reaching Sinai, what is given is the pattern of things shown on the mount—just as true and important if not a sacrifice had ever been offered. Even if we take the history, only such facts are taken as happened to them for types, and are written for instruction. That is, the object was, not to give a detailed history of Israel, but to give significant facts for our instruction. I say *facts*, but in no adequate account of them to bind them historically together, but perfect for the purpose they were meant for—to teach us God's ways with His people ; their ways with Him, their difficulties and dangers ; His patience and His goodness. I do not doubt, I need not say, that Israel passed through the Red Sea, that God gave them the manna, that the ark of the covenant was made. But what is the importance of these facts to me?

The consequence is that we have not facts out of which a whole connected history can be made ; though all needed for the then connection of the people with God, and their responsibility in after ages, is clearly and fully given. But we have a perfect store of divine instruction in every respect

to which the history can be scripturally applied.

Deuteronomy is a quite distinct revelation—declared to be so—a covenant made in the plains of Moab besides the covenant made in Horeb (Deut. xxix. i.). It is not a history save some small portions of it laying a ground for others, but exhortations and directions for the future, for the time of judges and priests, when Israel had already departed from God, going on to the case of asking for a king. This distinct covenant was founded, no doubt, on the relationship with God formed under the Sinaitic covenant, but formally supposes the people to have been unfaithful, and provides, in mercy, practical directions for the state, and predicts the issue in judgment and sovereign grace.

I dwell less on prophecy proper than on history, because the human element is less apparent when it is “thus saith the Lord,” or “the word of the Lord came;” it is a formal utterance. Yet even here it cannot be doubted that He who spake by the prophets formed the vessel also; only He possessed it. Holy men of old spake as they were moved (*pheromenoi*) by the Holy Ghost. When Isaiah says, “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,” who doubts that the heart of Isaiah was engaged, and that that heart in its feelings was the elevated earnest one which sought God’s glory, and identified it with the people which God had formed for the service to which He called him? But God working in the prophet wrought the testimony of earnest desire, as proper to move as warnings or prophetic announcements were to awaken conscience or sustain faith. So when Jeremiah, in the midst of overwhelming sorrows and hopeless

wickedness, cries, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth:" or uses several other such expressions, who doubts there is a human element—a broken and sorrowful heart? When he expresses the difficulty between his righteous judgment of evil and love to the people because they were God's people, and has the answer of God as to the exactly right feeling and path, a true heart finds more perfect divine instruction in it for his own heart, wrought in by analogous feelings, than if it was a mere dry declaration of truth; and much more God's divine interest in the feelings wrought in his heart, and his own association, with God's interest and glory in His people in the earth. But this is by the human element, but by God's drawing it fully out in its place, and expressing it in a divine way, with His own reply. Thus far, for the prophets, we have distinctly the divine use of the human element. I turn to the New Testament.

Here we have it, partly less, partly a great deal more, and this in a way exceedingly beautiful. In the Gospels we have the Word made flesh, and, as has been often noticed, the diverse characters of Christ—Messiah, Immanuel, the Servant-Prophet, the Son of man, Second Adam in grace, after a lovely scene of the remnant in Israel; and lastly, not Jesus in Galilee with the 'poor of the flock, or His heart reaching out in grace to Gentiles, but the love of God in Judea in the midst of a rejected and reprobate race, bringing in a new and divine thing into the earth, personally or by a given Comforter. Here the *subject* is, God manifest in flesh; and, of course, the human element is, so to speak, everything where His divinity is known. But the subject is absorbing—doubts, ignorance,

enmity, in those surrounding Him we have, but the subject absorbs everything ; and, unless at the utmost one or two expressions in John, I am not aware of a trace of the human element in the recital. The subject was everything, no epithet, no "blessed Jesus"—"beloved Jesus." The subject was too high, too holy, for the Holy Ghost in recording it by man's pen, to bring in man's feelings. He was the model and perfection of what was divine in man in the circumstances where we are ; and there needed no other human expressions to know how God met man in them. He was it. There is to me great perfection and loveliness in this. It sets a halo round the person of Jesus which no expression could have reached. Such would have spoiled it—been an intrusion on the heart. We want only that which moves it, not the moving of others about it. Besides, as I have said, it could not be ; because the whole perfection of God meeting man was in His person.

Now in the Acts we find the human element again, and it is in its place, but calls for no particular notice ; but in the Epistles it overflows. It is the expression of that particular character of privilege and grace in which the love and Spirit of God works in us towards others ; the unfolding and description of God's work in us, brought out by the gifts operating in the body. Christ had received gifts in man (*ba-adam*) and for him. It was introducing man into heavenly places where Christ had gone, and conformity to this wrought in him by the Holy Ghost, and unfolded by them in whom it had been first wrought that they might communicate ; as the Lord Himself expresses it, "He that is athirst, let him come unto me and drink." This is the man's own soul. But then "out of his belly"—his inmost affections—"shall

flow rivers of living water." Now this He spake of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter to be given after His ascension, yet in one who had drunk of Christ, and out of whose inmost affection the divine testimony flowed forth.

Yet there were cases where the human element was wholly inoperative. A man spoke with a tongue and spoke mysteries (which others could enjoy if they knew the tongue), and did not know what he said himself, though he knew the Spirit was working in him, connecting his soul with divine things in God; but his understanding was unfruitful, and if he spoke with his understanding, it was also a revelation to himself; and then, if an inspired instrument of communication to others, he spoke in words which the Holy Ghost taught, communicating things given by the Spirit, by words given by the Spirit too (*pneumatikois pneumatika*—1 Cor. ii.).

What characterizes then the Epistles especially is the human element. The privilege of loving with divine love, enduring all things for the elect's sake that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory; and, as Christ's life was to pervade and be expressed in all the circumstances of human life, that love and life in the inspired ones entered with the perfect wisdom of the Holy Ghost into them all, but expressed Christ's mind as to it as the Holy Ghost led them to express it, that it might be divine wisdom, and directly from God, though in and by a man.

It was in this sense different from Old Testament inspiration, in that the Man, the Lord, the Head of all, was gone on, high, and had received gifts for men, members of His body. Of old, men might say, Who hath known the mind of the Lord?—but, inspired by Him, give such an utter-

ance of a part of His counsels as He was pleased to communicate, or write a history as perfectly led of Him, the bearing of which, or its part in completing the whole, they were ignorant of, only when we see what is in the whole, thereby proving it divine; and prophets might search out their own prophecies to understand them (1 Pet. i); but the apostle may say, "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16).

No doubt they could only give what was given, but they gave it as what they had as His mind who was the wisdom of God. Inferior utterances, without fruit to the speaker's understanding, there might be, proving all was of God; but the proper inspiration of the New Testament to the apostles in their service was the perfect communication of the mind of Christ to them, and the perfect communication of it by them in the words given by the Holy Ghost who had revealed it. It was received intelligently by the same Spirit. But this mind of Christ took up man into all the glory and all the counsels of which He is the centre before the Father; but it descended, because He had become our life, into the conduct of a slave to his master, and a master to his slave, and to the babes who were not counted unworthy of the grace and guidance of Him whose arms had once embraced them. Nothing is too small for a person to be a Christian in—nothing, consequently, too small for the Spirit of Christ to guide us in. Nothing (blessed be God!) too high for them who are united to Christ, and are one day to be like Him, though lowliness alone can embrace them. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

I am aware how imperfect a sketch I have given of even the part of this subject which was before

my mind. My object was not to prove inspiration. I sought only to speak of what is called the human element in inspiration ; that we might fully give its precious place to that, and the simple not be deceived by even learned or orthodox unbelief ; as if God's using man—his lips, or his understanding, his mind in every way—meant the same as leaving him to himself, and me to his folly, so that what God did give should be uncertain, as inseparably mixed up with what is man's. Every Scripture (and the New Testament comes under that title) is given by inspiration of God ; every prophecy of Scripture, for holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ; the New too, for what the Holy Ghost revealed was communicated in words which the Holy Ghost taught. It is to Scripture we are referred by the apostle in the dangers of the last days.

As regards the human element in inspiration, of which I have written, especially in the New Testament, we have one or two passages which express it clearly. The Old Testament gave a testimony to Christ besides the historical bases of the whole matter in the history of man and God's people. He was the subject and object of their testimony ; but Christ's, and, through grace our, proper testimony, is different. The testimony was the expression of the thing in Himself ; so ours, though imperfect, the life of Jesus manifested in our mortal bodies, the epistle of Christ written by the Spirit of the living God on the fleshy tables of the heart. Now the New Testament inspiration partook of this (though there was also, in tongues and prophecy, dictated utterances) ; that is, the full blessing of the thing was conveyed to the heart and understanding. How was Paul made an apostle and even minister of the Church ? By the

revelation of Christ in glory to him for his own conversion through grace. So he speaks : "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." So in 2 Corinthians iv., "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give [out] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." So indeed in 1 Corinthians ii. 12-14, they have received the Spirit to know. Only, when it was to be for divine communication also, they spoke it in words taught of the Holy Ghost. And this is the instruction of the Lord Himself on the subject : "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink ; he that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The streams which flowed forth for others were the fruit of what had been drunk for self. This is true of all so ministering ; only, as we have seen, for what is properly called inspiration, the WORDS were given by the *Holy Ghost also*.

The very nature of Christianity is, God manifest in the flesh, entering personally into all our sorrows, temptations, and trials ; manifesting God's perfect goodness in them ; and then, through redemption, raising man to the elevation of which Christ's person and work were worthy in glorifying God ; the divine glory ; likeness to Christ as He is, gone in, in virtue of it, to heaven. And such is the character of inspiration, or work of the Holy Ghost as to the revelation of it ; and indeed necessarily must be. That is, it enters into the whole place and circumstances of man, reveals the

glory into which he is to be brought, God glorified perfectly in Christ being the holy and eternal ground, and the Lord's sympathy with him in all his circumstances. Hence nothing is too great for man—still man—for he is brought into the glory of God, like Christ the Son, and in righteousness, and partaker of the divine nature: nothing too little for God, because He is entered into the sympathy of love with all that man is, and introduces divine life itself into every detail—words—what? the tone of a man's voice, counts the hairs of his head. It will enter into the case of a runaway slave and his master, of the health of the children of an elect lady. It will take up everything in which divine life can exercise itself and give a tone to our ways, children and parents, masters and slaves. And there is nothing in which divine life does not show itself. It is the blessed truth that, first in Person, then in inspired doctrine and the life of Christ in us, God is entered into everything in which the heart of man is engaged. I find God and God in grace, where the unhappy rationalist only finds *a cloak*.



GERMAN RATIONALISTS AND THE BIBLE.—They comment on a book of which they know nothing, the object and import of which they have not even studied. An immense scope of connected thought and system, reaching from Genesis to the melting away of time into eternity—all its parts hanging together, and developing every form of relationship between God and man, historically pursued, yet morally and individually realized, in which each part fits into the other, like the pieces of a dissected map, proving the perfectness and completeness of the whole; all this system, I say, making a complete whole, in absolute unity, yet written (for

written it was, as the best testimony proves) at long intervals, over a space of some 1500 years, pursued through every various condition in which man can be placed, of ignorance, darkness, and light, with principles brought out into intended contrast, as the law and the gospel, yet never losing its perfect and absolute unity, or the relationship of its parts, all this is passed over by these sceptics. They are not conscious of the existence of it. They have about as much knowledge of the Bible as a babe who took the dissected map, and would put together two parts that were antipodes, because they were coloured red, and would look pretty.



FRAGMENT.—In itself learning is a hindrance to the knowledge of God ; though His grace does as it pleases. It hinders the knowledge of Scripture and of God's mind in it, because it leads the mind to another access of approach to these things, not the conscience, which is God's way. Learning may meet learning, and if one man give false, another may meet it by the true ; but it cannot meet Scripture, and there is no learning in the conscience but that we are sinners. The mind is the subject of the Scripture, not the Scripture the subject of the mind. In God's way only have the Scripture to itself, and it meets all learning and needs none. God may give power to apprehend it to one more than another ; but it meets everything the proud heart of man can desire, and wants nothing else, but in spirit judges and divides all things to the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is applicable thoroughly and everywhere. What, for instance, has impeded the intelligence of prophecy so much as mixing up human history with it ?

JESUS AT THE WELL OF SAMARIA.

JOHN IV.

There were two worn and weary ones
That met at Jacob's well ;
Both could of earth the emptiness
And toil and sorrow tell :
The one had sought in paths of sin
Her happiness to gain ;
And found, as all our hearts have found,
She sought it there in vain.

She comes alone, for good report
Her company would scorn ;
Weary, degraded, desolate,—
At mid-day not at morn :
Scorched by the blazing sun above,
Her conscience scorched within,
Samaria's erring daughter proved
The bitterness of sin.

But He, who sat by Jacob's well,
Was weary-hearted too ;
This earth He found a wilderness,
In which no rest He knew :
He toiled, He daily spent His strength,
His loins were girded fast ;
There were but " twelve hours in the day ;"
He'd labour to the last.

From Zion's hill, and Judah's plains,
To Gallilee He moved,—
To seek and save the lost, intent ;
This was the work He loved.
Love brought Him down from heaven to earth,
Our mis'ries touched His heart ;

Love made Him take a human birth,
With us to have a part.

Toil never out-wears love. Love toils
And finds its rest in toil ;
Love cannot rest, when those it loves
Are misery's sport and spoil ;
Love rests in work ; Love joys in pain,
If only it may bless
The objects of its care, and save
From suffering and distress.

The faithful Shepherd leaves the flock,
His one lost sheep to find ;
Follows its tracks o'er thorny wastes,
To toil and danger blind :
And when His lost one He has found,
How great is His delight !
He bears it on His shoulders home,
And counts the burden light.

Hungry, and thirsty, weary too,
He sits on Jacob's well ;
But the strong thirstings of His love,
To rescue souls from hell,
Make Him forget all but her need,
All but His Father's will :
His meat, His drink, His one delight,
His mission to fulfil.

It was a task that needed all
His gracious skill, to win
That hardened heart and darkened mind,
So long enslaved by sin :
What wise and faithful tenderness,
In all His words we see !
Each one of us, O Lord, confess,
Thou didst the same for me.

And still, O Lord, Thou art the same,
 Though seated on the throne,
 As when, on that eventful day,
 Thy grace to her was shown :
 THYSELF, the *precious* gift of God,
 Givest those waters *free* ;
 And openest lips, like hers of old,
 To win fresh souls to Thee.



THE MIDDLE WALL BROKEN DOWN.

JOHN IV.

“ He that *ascended* is the same that *descended*, that he might fill all things ” (Eph. iv). A *Lamb* was seen in the midst of the *throne* (Rev. v.) ; a Lamb, too, as it had been slain. It is He who *purged our sins* here, that is on high set down on *the right hand of the majesty* (Heb. i.). The One who was in the *form of God* became *obedient unto death* (Phil. ii.).

Such passages tell of elevation and of lowliness together ; full, ineffable nearness to God, and yet perfect nearness to us. It is as God and man in one Christ. The *history* of the blessed One is, thus like His *Person*.

Mystery of mysteries ! and yet the needful fact on which all depends, all of God’s glory in us, and of our blessedness in Him for ever.

The first chapter of John combines with these thoughts. Christ is there traced from the God-head to the altar ; and in touching these extreme

points, He is seen to occupy all the interval. He is the Creator of all things—the life and the light. The world was made by Him, and Israel were His own people. Made flesh, He dwelt among us, the Declarer of God, full of grace and truth. He is the Son in the bosom of the Father. He is the One that was before John ; and yet, with all this, He was baptized by John. And to bring Him fully down to the extreme point of lowliness, He is the Lamb slain for the sin of the world.

In such titles and characters, we trace the Lord along this chapter. Extremes meet in Him. He is *God*, and yet *the Lamb on the altar*. Thus is He seen in His *Person*.

We then trace Him in His *ministry*, very much after the same manner (in the next chapters, ii.–iv.) from the highest elevation of ministerial *power and glory*, till He reaches the most marvellous condescendings of ministerial *grace*. As Lord of creation, He turns water into wine, not merely supplying but creating provisions for a feast. He is then, as Lord of life and death, saying “ Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Then as the One who knows the thoughts long before, like God searching the heart, we read of Him, “ He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.” Then coming, as it were, out from the *glory* into the *grace* of ministry, He waits upon a poor, slow-hearted, timid soul, that sought Him by night, because, Gideon-like (Judges vi. 27), he was afraid to seek

Him by day. And at last, He seeks a poor out-cast, and that, too, in the sweetest, richest condescension. He will be her debtor for the meanest of all gifts, a cup of cold water, that He may win her confidence. He will have all the secrets of her conscience out, that He may get Himself and His healing in. Wondrous ! The One who began this course of ministry, as God turning the water into wine, here at the end of it appears as One who needed for Himself a cup of cold water at the hand of a stranger.

What a path is this !

But it is not merely the perfection of ministerial grace that is seen in this last action, the fulness of divine strength and glory is also in it. This asking for a cup of cold water was just what none could have done but God Himself.

Does this surprise us ? It may at first, as the burning bush surprised Moses. But by listening and worshipping, we may find God in this action, as surely as Moses found Him in that bush.

God Himself, at the very beginning had raised a partition wall between Himself and His revolted creature. The cherubim at the gate of the garden, with his flaming sword, keeping every way the way of the tree of life, was as a partition wall. The difference between clean and unclean, set up and instituted in the earliest patriarchal times, was the same. (See Gen. viii. 20.) And the same middle wall was but strengthened by a thousand hands, under the direction of the lawgiver afterwards,

God's holiness demanding this testimony to itself in a polluted, departed world. God could not own such a dead and defiled thing. But God's grace found out a way whereby to bring His banished home to Him. That is, He has found out a way whereby He might be just while the justifier of a sinner. This is His glory, His *own* glory. "There is no God else beside me, *a just God and a Saviour*, there is none beside me." He who raised the middle wall *alone* can break it down. But this He has done. This He did by the cross, by the blood of His own Lamb. As soon as that was shed, as soon as the life was yielded up in sacrifice and for reconciliation, God Himself broke down all partition walls. The veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, the rocks were rent also, and the graves of the saints were broken up. This great vista was thrown wide open, from the high heavens to the place of the power of death. Both the veil and the grave gave way, when Jesus gave up the ghost. The brightness of the highest heavens beamed upon the eye of the captives of death.

This virtue of the cross is accordingly now, in this gospel age, declared. "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity." This great fact is published by the gospel, in order that sinners, believing that God Himself has done this—has, in grace, crossed the boundary, which separated us from Him—

might, by faith, cross it after Him, and meet Him in the place of reconciliation.

Now, this is the very thing that the Lord Jesus is doing at the well of Sychar. A partition-wall was there: the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Rightly so. The Lord Himself had said to the twelve, "into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." God had raised all partition-walls, whether by the ordinances of the law, among the circumcised patriarchs, or by the sword of the cherubim at the gate of Eden. And no hand of man or angel could, by his own authority or in his own strength, touch a stone of such a building. But God would not leave one stone of it upon another; and here, at the well of Sychar, Jesus anticipates that. He crosses the boundary. He asks drink of one who was a woman of Samaria. This was breaking down middle walls with a strong hand, and crossing boundary lines with a firm step. But He who had raised them in righteousness can break them down in grace through righteousness. And that is what Jesus actually does in the cross, and what He anticipates here.

All this was enough to amaze her who was on the opposite side—and it did so. She sees the ruin of the wall, and she marvels. But the Lord did not build again that which He had destroyed, but encourages her to do as He had done. In divine grace He had crossed the line from God's side of it, and He would fain draw her from that

side of it where sinners lay in their separation from God. And He accomplishes this.

But it is always the *conscience* that must do this. It is conscience that has put us on the other side. Conscience put Adam amongst the trees of the garden, and it is that which keeps us all "short of the glory of God," or of the divine presence in peace.

It is, therefore, the conscience that must cross the boundary, and it is that which Jesus brings across it on this occasion. He exposes her to herself, He convicts her, He lets her know all things that ever she did ; but it is *in that very character* that she reaches him (see verse 29).

Have we crossed it, as she did ? with all the recollections of conscience, without keeping back a secret, have we reached Him ? If His glory were to break full in the twinkling of an eye, are we conscious, this moment, that we should not "come short" of it ? As in spirit we sometimes sing :—

" The day of glory bearing
Its brightness far and near,
'The day of Christ's appearing
We now no longer fear."

This is, indeed, with this sinner of Samaria, to be on the right side of the boundary line ; to be treading with firm foot, on the ruin of all partition-walls in His *peaceful* presence now, and looking to be in His *glorious* presence for ever !

GROWTH THROUGH THE TRUTH.

(I PETER ii. 1-6.)

In one sense, as here taught us by the Spirit of God through the apostle, the healthful position of the saint is ever that of the "new-born babe;" whilst in another sense we are, of course, to be making progress so as to become young men and fathers in Christ. As to practical position of soul in receiving truth from God, it is that of the new-born babe: "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." This is the place in which, as believers, we are set by the Spirit, in order that we may grow up into Christ.

But if we are "to grow by the sincere milk of the word," it is not by the exercise of our minds upon the word, nor yet even by great study of it merely; we need the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and in order to this, there must be the exercising of ourselves unto godliness—the "laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings," so that the Holy Spirit be not grieved. Has the Christian envy, guile, hypocrisies, allowed to work in his heart? There can be no growth in the true knowledge of the things of God. Therefore he is called upon to be ever a "new born babe," coming to receive, in the

consciousness of his own weakness, littleness, and ignorance, and in simplicity of heart, food from the word of God.

The Lord always keeps His simple dependent ones thus. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." But then the knowledge of God always humbles; the more we know of Him, the more shall we know of our own emptiness. "If any man think he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Just as the babe is constantly receiving nourishment from the mother, so need we to be constantly receiving spiritual nourishment from the word of God. When the word is received by us in faith, we become strengthened; we grow thereby in the knowledge of God, and of his grace. The apostle Paul, having heard of the faith of the Ephesians in the Lord Jesus, prays "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would "give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding ('heart') being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," etc. Having "tasted that the Lord is gracious," we come to His word and receive from Him that which we need to comfort, nourish, and refresh our souls. The word always comes with savour from Himself; it is known as "the word of his grace." I may study the word again and again; but unless I get

into communion with Him by it, it will profit me nothing—at least at the time.

God reveals not His things “to the wise and prudent,” but unto “babes.” It is not the strength of man’s mind judging about “the things of God,” that gets the blessing from Him; it is the spirit of the “babe desiring the sincere milk of the word.” He says, “open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” The strongest mind must come to the word of God as “the new-born babe.”

And so too in speaking of God’s truth; whenever we cannot “speak as the oracles of God,” through the power of communion, it is our business to be silent. We should be cautious not to trifle with unascertained truth. Nothing hinders growth more than this—trifling with unascertained truth: we then act as masters and not as learners. Our position as regards the truth of God must be ever that of “new-born babes desiring the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby.”

But there is nothing so hard for our hearts as to be humble—nothing so easy for them as to get out of this place of lowliness. It is not by precepts merely that we are either brought into this state, or preserved there; it is by “tasting that the Lord is gracious.” It is quite true that God is a God of judgment—that He will exercise vengeance on His enemies; but this is not the way in which He stands towards the Christian. He is made known unto us as “the God of all grace;” and the posi-

tion in which we are set is that of "tasting that He is gracious."

How hard it is for us to believe this, that the Lord is gracious! The natural feeling of our hearts is, "I know that thou art an austere man." Are our wills thwarted? We quarrel with God's ways, and are angry because we cannot have our own. It may be perhaps that this feeling is not manifested; but still at any rate there is the want in all of us naturally of the understanding of the grace of God, the inability to apprehend it. See the case of the poor prodigal in Luke xv: the thought of his father's grace never once entered into his mind when he set out on his return, and therefore he only reckoned on being received as a "hired servant." But what does the father say? What are the feelings of his heart? "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; . . . for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." This is grace, free grace.

So too in the case of the woman of Samaria (the poor adulteress, ignorant of the character of Him who spake with her, "the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," and therefore the suited One to meet her need): the Lord says to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Hadst thou only under-

stood what grace is, thou wouldest have asked, and I would have given !

It is not only when there is open rebellion against God, and utter carelessness and unconcern about salvation, that there is this darkness of understanding as to grace. Our natural heart has got so far away from God, that it will look to anything in the world—to the devil even—to get happiness ; anywhere but to the grace of God. Our consciences, when at all awakened to a sense of sin, and of its hatefulness in the sight of God, think that He cannot be gracious. Adam, had he known the grace of God, when he found himself naked, would at once have gone to God to cover him. But no, he was ignorant of it ; he saw his state, and he sought to hide himself from God amongst the trees of the garden. And so it is with us. The consciousness of being naked before God, apart from the understanding of His grace, makes us flee from Him.

Nay, further, as believers in Jesus, when our consciences come to be exercised, and we feel that we must have to do with God in everything, we may not have the distinct sense of the Lord's being gracious ; and there will then be not only a deep sense of our responsibility, but at the same time the thought that we have to answer to God's requirements, and shall be judged of Him according to the way in which we do so. There is a measure of the truth in this : the requirements of God must be met ; but then the wrongness is in

thinking that, if we do not find in ourselves what will please God, He will condemn us because of it.

On the other hand there is sometimes the thought that grace implies God's passing by sin. But no, quite the contrary ; grace supposes sin to be so horribly bad a thing that God cannot tolerate it. Were it in the power of man, after being unrighteous and evil, to patch up his ways, and mend himself so as to stand before God, there would then be no need of grace. The very fact of the Lord being gracious shows sin to be so evil a thing, that, man being a sinner, his state is utterly ruined and hopeless, and nothing but free grace will do for him—can meet his need.

A man may see sin to be a deadly thing, and he may see that nothing that defiles can enter into the presence of God : his conscience may be brought to a true conviction of sin ; yet this is not "tasting that the Lord is gracious." It is a very good thing to be brought even to that, for I am then tasting that the Lord is righteous, and it is needful for me to know it ; but then I must not stop there : sin without grace would put me in a hopeless state. Peter had not "tasted that the Lord was gracious " when he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord !" and therefore he thought that his sin unfitted him for the presence of the Lord.

Such too was the thought of Simon the Pharisee, respecting the poor woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wiped them with the

hairs of her head. Ah, if this man were a prophet (if he had known the mind of God), he would have sent away this woman out of his presence, "for she is a sinner." And why? Because he did not know that the Lord was gracious. He had a certain sense of the righteousness of God, but not the knowledge of His grace. I cannot say that God ought to be gracious; but I can say (if ignorant of His grace), that He ought to cast me, as a sinner, away from His presence, because He is righteous.

Thus we see that we must learn what God is to us, not by our own thoughts, but by what He has revealed Himself to be, and that is the "God of all grace."

The moment I understand (as Peter did) that I am a sinful man, and yet that it was because the Lord knew the full extent of my sin, and what its hatefulness was, that He came to me, I understand what grace is. Faith makes me see that God is greater than my sin, and not that my sin is greater than God: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." As soon as I believe Jesus to be the Son of God, I see that God has come to me because I was a sinner and could not go to Him.

Man's ability to meet the requirements of the holiness of God has been fully tried: but the plainer the light came, the more did it show to man his darkness; and the stricter the rule, the more did it bring out his self-will. And then it

was, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"—"when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This is grace !

God, seeing the blood of His Son, is satisfied with it ; and if I am satisfied with it, this is what glorifies God.

But the Lord that I have known as laying down His life for me is the same Lord that I have to do with every day of my life ; and all His dealings with me are on this same principle of grace. Do I want to learn what His love is ? it is taught in the cross ; but He gave Himself for me in order that all the fulness and joy that are in Him might be mine. I must be a learner of it still—a new-born babe "desiring the sincere milk of the word that I may grow thereby."

The great secret of growth is the looking up to the Lord as gracious. How precious, how strengthening is it, to know that Jesus is at this moment feeling and exercising the same love towards me as when He died upon the cross for me ! This is a truth that should be used by us in the most common everyday circumstances of life. Suppose, for instance, I find an evil temper in myself, which I feel it difficult to overcome : let me bring it to Jesus as my friend, virtue goes out of Him for my need. Faith should be ever thus in exercise against temptation, and not simply my own effort ; my own effort against it will never be sufficient. The source of real strength is in the sense of the Lord's being gracious.

But the natural man in us always disallows Christ as the only source of strength and of every blessing. Suppose my soul is out of communion, the natural heart says, I must correct the cause of this before I can come to Christ: but He is gracious. And, knowing this, the way is to return to Him at once, just as we are, and then humble ourselves deeply before Him. It is only in Him, and from Him, that we shall find that which will restore our souls. Humbleness in His presence is the only real humbleness. If we own ourselves in His presence to be just what we are, we shall find that He will show us nothing but grace.

But though "disallowed indeed of men"—of the natural heart in everyone of us—who is this that says, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded?" It is God; He laid this corner stone, not man; and He says, This is what I think of Christ. By learning of God, through His teaching me by the Holy Spirit, I come to have the same thoughts about Jesus that He has. Here I find my strength, my comfort, my joy. That in which God delights and will delight for ever is now my joy also.

God says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" "mine elect in whom my soul delighteth;" and, working these (His) thoughts into my soul, I too see Jesus to be precious, and find my delight in Him. Thus He who was crucified for me—who "bare my sins in his own body

on the tree"—is precious to God and precious to me.

God could find no rest save in Jesus. We may look throughout the world, we shall find nothing which can satisfy our hearts but Jesus. If God looked for truth, for righteousness, all He could desire He found in Jesus ; and He found it in Him for us. Here is that which gives comfort to the soul. I see Jesus "now in the presence of God *for us*:" and God is satisfied, God delights in Him.

It is Christ Himself in whom God rests, and will rest for ever ; but then Jesus, having borne and blotted out my sins by His own blood, has united me to Himself in heaven. He descended from above, bringing God down to us here : He has ascended, placing the saints in union with Himself there. If God finds Jesus precious, He finds me (in Him) precious also.

Jesus, as man, has glorified God on the earth : God rests in that ; as man, having accomplished redemption, He "has passed into the heavens, now to appear in the presence of God for us." It is Jesus who gives abiding rest to our souls, and not what our thoughts about ourselves may be. Faith never thinks about that which is in ourselves as its ground of rest ; it receives, loves, and apprehends what God has revealed, and what are God's thoughts about Jesus, in whom is His rest.

It is not by human knowledge or intellect that we attain to this. The poor ignorant sinner, when enlightened by the Spirit, can understand how precious Jesus is to the heart of God, as well as the most intellectual. The dying robber could give a

better account of the whole life of Jesus than all around him, saying, "This man has done nothing amiss;" he was taught by the Spirit.

Are we much in communion with God, our faces will shine, and others will discover it though we may not be conscious of it ourselves. Moses, when he had been talking with God, wist not that the skin of his face shone; he forgot himself, he was absorbed in God. As knowing Jesus to be precious to our souls, our eyes and our hearts being occupied with Him, they will be effectually prevented from being taken up with the vanity and sin around; and this too will be our strength against the sin and corruption of our own hearts. Whatever I see in myself that is not in Him is sin; but then it is not thinking upon my own sins, and my own vileness and being occupied with them, that will humble me; but thinking of the Lord Jesus, dwelling upon the excellence in Him. It is well to have done with ourselves and to be taken up with Jesus. We are entitled to forget ourselves, we are entitled to forget our sins. we are entitled to forget all but Jesus. It is by looking to Jesus that we can give up anything, that we can walk as obedient children; His love constrains us. Were it simply a command, we should have no power to obey.

The Lord give us thus to be learners of the fullness of grace which is in Jesus, the beloved and elect One of God, so that "we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

May we, beloved, in searching into the truth of God, "having tasted that the Lord is gracious," ever be found "as new-born babes desiring the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby!"

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 heaven. 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 CHRISTIAN MARINER.

*“ And so He bringeth them to the haven where they
would be.”*

Yes, billow after billow—see they come
Faster and rougher, as his little boat
Nears evermore the haven. Oftentimes
It seems to sink and fall adown the wave,
As if borne backward by the struggling tide ;
Yet mounting billow after billow, wave
On wave o'er riding, tempest-tossed and shattered,
Still, still it nears the haven evermore.
“ Poor mariner ! art not thou sadly weary ? ”
Dear brother, rest is sweeter after toil.
“ Grows not thine eye confused and dim with sight
Of nothing but the wintry waters ? ” True ;
But then my Pole-Star, constant and serene,
Above the changing waters, changes not.
“ But what if clouds, as often, veil the sky ? ”
Oh, then an unseen eye hath ever ta'en
The rudder from my feeble hands the while ;
And I cling to it. “ Answer me once more,
Mariner ; what thinkest thou when the waters beat
Thy frail boat backward from the longed-for harbour ? ”
Oh, brother, though innumerable waves
Still seem to rise betwixt me and my home,
I know that they are numbered ; not one less
Should bear me homeward, if I had my will ;
For One who knows what tempests are to weather,
O'er whom there broke the wildest billows once,
He bids these waters swell. In His good time
The *last* rough wave shall bear me on its bosom,
Into the haven of eternal peace.
No billows after ! They *are* numbered, brother.
“ Oh, gentle mariner, steer on, steer on ;
My tears still flow for thee ; but they are tears
In which faith strives with grief, and overcomes.”

THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING.

(EPHES. i. 15—ii. 10.)

“That ye may know what is the hope of His calling.” God has called you; what is the hope of His calling? What future is there in this call? We get it in chap. i. 5: “Having been predestinated unto the adoption of children.” I know “Abba’s” heart now; I am to know “Abba’s” house then. If God says, “How beautiful My house will be with My Son in it, surrounded by those associated with him,” is it nothing to my heart that God already has joy in the thought? It will have a separating effect on the soul from evil to God. “And what the riches of the glory,” etc? Glory is not the same as the Father’s house. There is rest in the thought of the house, whereas in the glory we get the public expression of it. What a contrast to this beggarly world down here! Here it is all toil; but what is it all leading to? To a bright, brilliant, glorious future, now made little of by people here; then made much of by God up there. So far there is no question of life; He takes them as it were and shows them the corpse they were, the pit they were in. God loves to be Centre, to have round Him a circumference of blessing. What was the pit you came from? What good was there in it? God could find none; so you cannot. Everything in it is bad, though it need not come out. As the pit was

down there, and nothing but evil working in it, so the blessing came from quite a different place—from the Man up there upon the throne. Had we taken a few steps towards Him? No! it is even when we were “dead in sins.” It is not a question of bad fruits—“dead in sins” (not alive in sins, as in Romans), all entirely wrong, all dead; not a correct notion of God, nor of Christ, nor the Holy Ghost, nor of ourselves.

There are three things: life-giving, separation from the grave, and a place of permanent rest. Satan cannot rob me of blessing, because I am within Christ. The bringing into a place of blessing is a thing to be known individually; knowing it, and knowing the existence of it, are very different things. You say you believe it. Have you got it yourself? Can you say, “I have gone up from the tomb by a power that associates me with all that is dear to God? God looks upon me, and says, ‘There is an individual who has life together with My Son.’” Can *you* say it? Is the life that you live in the flesh by faith of the Son of God?

God promised a son to Abraham; circumstances said, “Impossible: you cannot have any children.” But Abraham, as it were, said, “Let God alone, He must see to His promise.” Difficulties to believers now come in exactly the same way. Things inconsistent are brought up by conscience: if you say, “That is inconsistent with the Man up there in the glory, I am ashamed of myself,” you judge it in faith; but if you say, “I have failed, I am no

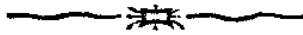
Christian," you play into Satan's hands ; you do not judge yourself, but slur over the evil. We get here three things : Abba's heart, Abba's house, and that the Man, the perfect Servant of God, who was obedient even unto death, has won His place up there. He went in not only as One who had a right to go in, but because He had humbled Himself. These things just mark the place that you and I are in as Christians. God wanted to show what a God He was, and the resources He had in His Son.

If God has raised us up together, etc., it is that we may have communion with Himself through this Christ dwelling in us by faith. We cannot get steadiness of works, unless with a soul abiding in communion with God. If I am in communion with God, what do I get? If a heart be right with God, there is talking about Christ always—Christ at home in the heart. I look up and say, "There is a Man on the throne of God, and He has all power in His hand : " the Son of the virgin, the Seed of the woman ; and God says, "That is My beloved Son, the fulness of Godhead." If you know Him, you may get all the fulness of God. I never shall know Him ; but I know Himself. God presents in that Man, seen there by faith, what can fill the humblest mind.

God has formed in my soul such an estimate of Christ that I could not do without Him ; and more than that, He cannot do without me (1 Cor. xii. 21). Nothing is good without Christ, and the

presence of Christ in anything makes it a home-scene to the heart.

The valley of Baca is a precious place if Christ be there. Oh, what a height and depth in the truth that makes us one with Him! What an expression of love! What an expression of light!



THE PATH AND CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN.

(I PETER i. 1-7.)

The Spirit of God in the Epistles of Peter does not contemplate the Christian as united to Christ in heaven, but as running the course through the trials of this world toward heaven. Both things are true, and we need both. We are running through the wilderness towards it, and at the same time we can say, through the Spirit, that we are one with Christ in heaven. It is in the former of these two ways that the Christian is looked at here. The inheritance is reserved for him, and then we have the application of the truth and grace of God to the condition we are in. It is exceedingly precious to know that, no matter what the trials may be or the difficulties, we are to expect that down here. It is merely a passage through the trials and difficulties (which are useful to us after all), and there is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled," kept safe in heaven for us; and, as he adds then, we are kept for it by the power of God through

faith. This is the position in which he sets the Christian. We are "begotten again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is not exactly that we are risen with Him; but he looks at Christ as risen and gone in, and therefore that He has begotten us again to a living hope, and that "an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away." There it is, kept safe in heaven for us. As Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." All his happiness was safe in heaven, and the Lord could keep it safe for him; and then we have the blessed truth that we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

There is the character and the path of the Christian—both these things; the blessed faithfulness of the Lord in keeping it for us and us for it, and at the same time the character of the Christian as passing onwards towards it, and a little of the trials of the way. We first see that here. You will find it in the striking contrast with the law and the position that Israel had under it. Indeed this runs through the whole—constantly in the New Testament.

The apostle says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." He rests them on this blessed truth—their being "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Not merely a people chosen out as a nation, but it was that foreknowledge of God the Father through which

they had this place : and then the Spirit of God comes and sanctifies them or sets them apart. We find, next, what they are set apart to practically, as a present thing ; and that is, the obedience of Jesus Christ, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. These are just the two essential points of the life and path of Jesus, one running into the other ; and, in this case, if I may so speak, the one completing the other. For us the great thought is the obedience of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. " Jesus Christ " applies to the obedience as well as to the sprinkling of the blood ; and both are in contrast with the law, whether as regards what the law required, or as regards the sacrifices of the law ; the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ are in contrast with both.

As regards our obedience, it is essential for the true character of our path as Christians that we should lay hold of what this obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ was. Legal obedience in us is a different thing. We have got a will of our own : this was not true of Christ. He had a will in one sense, as a man, but he said, " Not my will, but thine, be done." But we have got a will of our own ; it may be checked and broken down. But if the law is applied to us, it is as stopping this will, but it finds it here, and such is our notion of obedience constantly. Take a child ! there is a will of its own ; but when the parents' will comes in, and the child yields instantly without a struggle, and

either does what it is bid or ceases to do what it is forbidden, you say, This is an obedient child, and it is delightful to see such an obedient spirit. But Christ never obeyed in that way. He never had a will to do things of His own will in which God had to stop Him. It was not the character of His obedience. It is needed with us, and we all know it, if we know anything of ourselves ; but it was not the character of His obedience. He could not wish for the wrath of God in the judgment of sin, and He prayed that this cup might pass from Him. But the obedience of Christ had quite another character from legal obedience. His Father's will was His motive for doing everything ; " Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God."

This is the true character of the obedience of Jesus Christ, and of ours as Christians. The other may be needed for us—the stopping us in our own will ; but the true character of our obedience, and that which characterizes the whole life of the Christian is this—that the will of God, of our Father we can say, is with us, as it was with Christ, our reason, our motive, for doing a thing. When Satan came and said to Him, " command that these stones be made bread," He answers " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." His actual life as carried out in conduct flowed from the word of God, which was His motive for doing it ; and if He had not that, He had no motive. You will find that it alters the whole tenor and spirit of a man's life. We have to be stopped in

our own will, that is true, because we have the old nature in us ; but it alters the whole spirit and tenor of a man's life. If I have no motive but my Father's will, how astonishingly it simplifies everything ! If you never thought of doing a thing except because it was God's positive will that you should do it, how three-quarters of your life would at once disappear ! This is the truth practically as to ourselves ; yet we clearly see that such was the obedience of Christ.

This, too, is the principle of real piety, because it keeps us in constant dependence upon God, and constant reference to God. It is an amazing comfort for my soul to think that there is not a single thing all through my life which God as my Father has not a positive will about me to direct me ; that there is not a step from the moment I am born (though while we are unconverted we understand nothing about it) in which there is not a positive path or will of God to direct me here (cf. Rom. xii. 2 ; Ephes. v. 17 ; Matt. vi. 22 ; John vii. 17). I may forget it and fail, but we have in the word and will of God what keeps the soul, not in a constant struggle against one thing and another, but in the quiet consciousness, that the grace of God has provided for everything—that I do not take a step but what His love has provided for. It keeps the soul in the sweet sense of divine favour and in dependence upon God, so that like David we can say, "Thy right hand upholdeth me." Moses does not say, "Show me *a* way through the wilderness,"

but "Show me now *thy* way" (Ex. xxxiii. 13). A man's ways are what he is: God's way shows what He is.

The heart gets separated in its path more and more intelligently to God, and gets to understand what God is. If I know that God likes this and likes that along my path, it is because I know what He is; and besides its being the right path and causing us thus to grow in intelligent holiness of life, there is piety in it too. The constant reference of the heart affectionately to God is real piety, and we have to look for that. We have it perfectly in our Lord; "I know," He says, "that thou hearest me always." There is the confidence of power and reference to God with confiding affection. If I know that it is His path of goodness, His will that is the source of everything to me, there is the cultivation of piety with God, communion is uninterrupted, because the Spirit is not grieved. This is the obedience of Jesus Christ, to which we are set apart.

Then there is the other blessed truth. We are set apart through the Spirit to the value and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. We know that when the priests were consecrated (Lev. viii.) the blood was put upon their right ear and upon the hand and foot, as a token that all the mind and work and walk should be according to the preciousness of this blood. In God's sight there is not a single spot upon us because of the blood that has been shed (1 John i. 7), and we

have to walk according to the value of that blood before God. In the case of the leper the blood was to be sprinkled upon him seven times (Lev. xiv). He was set apart to God (in type) under the whole perfect efficacy of what the work and blood of Jesus are in God's sight.

Such was the double character of Jesus, whether throughout His life or in death. Even in dying His obedience was His life in that sense. And this is what characterizes the Christian. This introduces us at once into the unclouded apprehension of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven for us. He has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I see His path down here; He has gone up there; death has no power over Him. And now through Him nothing stands in the way between me and the incorruptible inheritance. Death itself is totally overcome—so entirely, that when the Lord Jesus comes the believers then living will never die at all. In any case, we shall be changed and glorified; but I speak now as showing the way in which the power of death is set aside, so that instead of our belonging to death now, death belongs to us. "All things," the apostle says, "are yours, whether life or death, or things present or things to come." Christ having come in and having gone down to the full depth of everything for us, He has gone through it all, and has left no trace of it in the resurrection. It is not merely that the blood has been sprinkled,

but He has left no trace of anything. Therefore, though we may die, it is gain if we do. It is to an inheritance incorruptible.

Then we come to a third point in the chapter, that is, the being kept along the way. There are difficulties, and trials, and temptations : it is well that we should look them in the face. Everybody is not passing smoothly through this life, though some may be more so than others. There are plenty of difficulties and trials, and we have to make straight paths for our feet. Still, we are "kept by the power of God," but, mark this, it is "through faith." We have to remember that, and this is why the trials come in. We can count upon the whole power of God, but it is exercised in sustaining our faith in God, as the Lord says to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." He does not take us out of trial ; on the contrary, it is said, "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." There may be this heaviness through trial ; no such thing as doubting God's goodness, but the pressure, whether of sorrow or of that which might tend to make our feet slip, may produce heaviness of spirit. But after all it is "only for a season," and "if need be." Do not make yourselves uneasy : the One who holds the reins of the *need-be* is God. He does not take pleasure in afflicting. If there is the *need-be* for it, we go through the trial, but it is only for a moment. It is a process that is going on, and do you fancy that you do not want it?

The great secret is to have entire confidence in the love of God, in the certainty that He is the doer of it—not looking at circumstances or at second causes, but seeing the hand of the Lord in it, that it is the trial [testing] of our faith, and that it is only on the way. When the day comes in which God has things His own way (He does His own work now, of course, but when He has things His own way,) these very trials will be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is a process that He is carrying on now ; it may be even the putting into the furnace to bring out the preciousness of the faith. It is not a question of being cleansed, but He does cause us to pass through all that which He sees needed for discipline. He uses the things that are in the world : the evil, the sin, the ill-will of others, all the things that are in the world, He uses simply as an instrument to break down and exercise our heart, so that our obedience may be simple, and that our faith may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

We see thus what a strengthening it is to wait for Christ. It is not spoken of here in the highest way, but it is the same general principle. I am waiting. I do not think much of an uncomfortable inn if I know that I am only there for a short time on the way. I might perhaps wish it were better, but I do not trouble myself much about it, because I am not living there. I am not living in this world, I am dying here ; if there is a bit of the old.

life, it has to be put to death. My life is hid with Christ in God. I am waiting for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ—waiting for God's Son from Heaven, who is going to take us there, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away ; and all that we pass through here is merely this exercise of heart, which God sees to be needed whilst on the way to where the Lord Himself will have us with Himself, and that for ever. And there is nothing more practically important for everyday work and service, than our waiting for God's Son from heaven. If I am living as belonging to the world, I cannot have comfort. The apostle says, " If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And if we are getting into ease in it, we shall find His discipline. But the moment I am waiting for God's Son from heaven, my life is but the dealings of God with me with an object, and the object is that it should be to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Let me ask you, dear reader, What would be the effect of Christ's coming on your soul? Would it be this? Here I am passing through in heaviness because of manifold temptations, but He will come and take me out of it to Himself. Or would it surprise you? Would it find you with a number of things which you would have to leave behind? As to your heart, where is your heart with respect to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Young or old (there may be more to learn if you are young ; but), would the

coming of the Lord Jesus Christ find you with plenty of things that you would have to throw overboard? or with this feeling, Here is an end of all the exercises of heart; He for whom I have been waiting is coming to take me to Himself. There is the difference between Christians. If my whole life is founded upon this, that His will is the motive and spring of it, I shall find the exercises and the needed trial; but the coming of the Lord would be simply this to my soul—He is coming to take me away to Himself.

The Lord give us to be of a true heart, and to remember that, if we are Christians, Christ is our life, and Christ could not have a portion down here. Joy and peace and quietness of spirit to go with it, and real happiness: only faith must be in exercise. Abraham found in the mountain a place where he could intercede with God; whilst Lot was saying, "I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die." Unbelief always looks at the place of faith as the most awful thing possible—all darkness. The Lord give us to know what it is to live the life which we live "by the faith of the Son of God!"



"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

THE LAST WATCH OF THE NIGHT.

REV. XIX. 7.

It ends—the vigil of high festival,
The solemn night of song ;
For lo ! the crimson day has lit the hills,
The day desired so long.

From peak to peak there spreads the jasper glow,
The morning star grows dim ;
How passing strange the joy that now we know—
So soon to look on Him.

Oh, deeper than our longing and our love.
More wondrous than our bliss,
His love that waited while the ages rolled
To welcome us as *His* !

And now, the watching and the waiting o'er,
The sin and sadness passed,
Behold, within the palaces of gold,
The harps are strung at last !

“The Bridegroom from His chamber goeth forth,
Resplendent as the sun ;
O Bride, arise, and put thy jewels on,
The desert journey done.”

Thus do the morning stars together sing,
Our shout of joy replies ;
For lo ! He cometh as the solemn dawn
Awakes the silent skies.

The joy of God's high city peals afar,
Through portals open wide ;
All Heaven awaits the shining marriage train,
The Bridegroom and the Bride.



“SURELY I COME QUICKLY. AMEN. EVEN SO
COME, LORD JESUS.”