

# "WORDS OF TRUTH."

EccI. xii. 10.

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"THE ENTRANCE OF THY WORDS GIVETH LIGHT: IT GIVETH UNDERSTANDING  
TO THE SIMPLE."—Ps. cxix. 130.

SECOND EDITION.

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VOL. 1.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH.

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## P R E F A C E.

THE first volume of "Words of Truth," is now complete, and in the Reader's hands. Many an earnest prayer has gone up to the Lord for an abundant blessing on its pages; and the earnest prayer still is, that it may be a blessing in His hands. It is comforting to think, that He stoops to use the weak things of this world, and the things that are despised, to bring glory to Himself, and blessing to His people, as to all!

Under the gospel dispensation, God has taken to Himself, the attitude and title of "God our Saviour," towards a world of poor fallen sinners, displaying His grace in the salvation of the lost, on the ground, and through the virtues of the Sacrifice of His Son. He is not willing that any should perish. His desire is, that all should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are workers together to this end. Surely it is blessed to be in ever so feeble a manner, in the channel of divine thoughts, and workings. All this, too, is for Christ's glory—this is the ultimate aim and object of the divine mind.

The knowledge of God Himself is the highest attainment to which the soul can aim. It is this by which the saints grow and increase, so that they become, if learning, Fathers in Christ; for they "know Him who was from the beginning." That is, they know Him who has revealed to us the heart and nature of God.

The Word of His Truth in the Scriptures is that by which He reveals Himself and His ways. The pages of this little Magazine may be useful, by His blessed Spirit's teaching, in helping the reader to know Him in some little measure. May they have His abundant blessing, whether towards the saved, or towards the unsaved.—Ed.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH.



## THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

LEV. xvi.

WHAT a fitting theme for the first number of our new volume! How it falls in with the whole tone of Christianity as revealed in the Word of God! Reconciliation to God, founded on atonement, laying the basis of the soul's relationship with God. Would that there was more faith in this. God never sets an unreconciled sinner to walk in the footsteps of Jesus; nor does He instruct and train an unpurged sinner that he may become a bearer of fruit. The knowledge of atonement for sin, and the consciousness of reconciliation to God, are the first steps in the Christian course. The Christian, in the true sense of the name, is one who is "reconciled to God by the death of his Son,"—reconciled on the ground of the work of Jesus on the cross—not waiting in uncertainty to know at some future time whether or not all will be well, but one whose reconciliation to God, and whose acceptance in the Beloved, are settled things, founded on the atoning blood of the Lamb; and all this before he is set to walk one step in the Christian course. If souls were to apprehend this, how many difficulties would be solved. How much more real Christian fruit-bearing we would see around. Instead of the low, depressing state of the generality of Christians, ever occupied with themselves and their sins, we would find happy peaceful hearts occupied with Christ, and with others who love Him; and in praising Him "who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood" (Rev. i. 5, 6), quite done with themselves and their sins as to their acceptance before God. It comes from the fact that they never yet have rested in *faith* on the blood of the Lamb at all. Faith believes what God says; it never raises a question as to this,

The moment reasoning begins, faith ends. The language of faith is the language of assurance—perfect rest in the testimony of God.

With these few remarks, we will examine a few points in the chapter we have opened, containing the ceremony of the great day of atonement in Israel. This yearly ceremony of the tenth day of the seventh month was a shadow of the “good things to come.” The faithful Israelite had his conscience cleansed for twelve months; while the day to which it pointed—the great day of atonement on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—gives the believer now an eternally purged conscience. “The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins,” (Heb. x. 1, 2.) The faithful in Israel rejoiced on that day to know that God’s claims were satisfied, and the savour of the blood of atonement had spoken on the mercy-seat before God; and that his sins had all gone away on the head of the scape-goat to a land not inhabited, never again to be re-called. But his conscience was not “perfected for ever.” The services of that day “could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.” (Heb. ix. 9.) If this could have been, there need not have been any repetition of the offering; and, therefore, as year by year the day of atonement returned, it showed that the law made nothing, not even his conscience, perfect.

Before we enter on the ceremonies which pointed to, and were a shadow of, the great antitype, we must examine the position in which the unreconciled sinner is in the world. We read in verse 2nd,—“And the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not: *for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat.*” Solemn thought that because God was there, man in his sins could not be there. If God in the essential holiness of his character, and the sinner out of Christ, were to meet, what must ensue? Nothing but unmitigated judgment. The Christian *has* met God in Christ, and knows what God is. “By Him (Christ) he believes in God;” thus his faith and hope is in the character

of that God whom Christ has revealed, and in whom he believes (1st Pet. i. 21). When Adam transgressed and fell, and God drove Him out from His presence, and cut off his access to the tree of life, he went outside the presence of God, and begat a son in his *own* image and likeness—the image and likeness of a fallen man who had been driven out of the presence of God. Every soul of his posterity to this hour are thus driven out in him. One may not have sinned as much as another, and may not have brought forth as much of the works of the flesh; and although *each* has his sins as his own, still, *both* have the *nature* of fallen Adam, from which those sins hath come; and neither the nature nor the fruits of it can ever enter God's presence. How then is the sinner to be brought to God?

The Lord chose the nation of Israel out of the world, took them out of Egypt, and brought them through the wilderness on their way to the promised land. Just as they were brought out, they rebelled against Him, and made a golden calf, and worshipped it as the god that had brought them out of Egypt (see Ex. xxxii.) God then gave them sacrifices and priesthood as a means of drawing nigh to Him; and as soon as they were appointed, and the priests were consecrated, they sinned and fell. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord, which the Lord had commanded them not, and they died by the judgment of God (Lev. x.); and so, the way into the Holiest, where God dwelt in the glory or cloud on the mercy-seat, was forbidden, "because I will appear in the cloud on the mercy-seat." Solemn thought, that the one man to whom the privilege of entering God's manifested presence belonged, was shut out by a vail; the only man in a world of sinners who had the privilege to go there, was forbidden, "that he die not." Infinite mercy, that God should have thus prevented the access of sinners in their sins to His presence, because death and judgment must ensue. We do not sufficiently realise this. We do not, as we ought, recognise the intense holiness of God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity" (Heb. 1. 13). And until a sinner has a perfect title to stand in His presence of light, within the vail, he cannot walk one step aright. He may be religious after a fashion, be most sincere in his efforts and desires to get into God's presence, but all this is exercised with a vail between him and God; and,

therefore, it is but the servile work of the sinner who, however sincerely, seeks to establish a footing, gain acceptance, and obtain access thus to God.

Reader, pause and ask yourself, Is it thus with me? Are you by your prayers, or your alms, or whatever it may be, labouring without the sense of acceptance, to gain a standing at some future period, in God's presence? Or, are you one of those who are seeking to serve God in the liberty of grace, and in the enjoyment, as a present thing, of a perfect title to His presence? Let us see, therefore, from our chapter, how the sinner is to be brought to God. How he is to have a title to stand with boldness before God, with such a title as may fully satisfy Him, as suitable to answer his claims. Now God himself has provided this for all; and the moment you believe, you stand in all the value of it before Him.

There are three points in our chapter which I would press upon my reader:—

1. The purity and spotlessness of Christ, whose blood alone is this title; and His presenting Himself to do the will of God (ver. 4-7).

2. The value of His sacrifice in God's eyes (ver. 12, 13, &c.)

3. The result of His word to all who believe (ver. 20-22).

We may remark that in verses 4-7 there is no question of blood-shedding. Aaron, clad in white linen garments, presents the victims before the Lord. Now, what Aaron was thus officially and typically, Christ was personally. Aaron, thus clad in pure white garments, represented Christ in His own pure and spotless perfection and His holy nature, upon which no sin could come. Such was the impossibility that He could contract defilement, although surrounded with it, and in contact with it daily and hourly, that when the poor defiled leper presents himself to be cleansed, "*He puts forth his hand and touched him;*" contact which would only have brought defilement to another, but not to Christ. When Aaron presented the victims before the Lord, it pointed to the great antitype Himself, presenting Himself to accomplish the will of God, according to Psalm xl. There we find that the sacrifices of the law could not put away sin; they could, and did, doubtless, point to Christ. Their continual presence and repetition proved that sin was there; and consequently they were not satisfying to God's heart, except as they pointed to the sacrifice of His Son. Christ presents himself to accomplish all, and thus do God's will. "Sacrifice and

offering thou didst not desire ; mine ears hast thou opened : burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God : yea, thy law is within my heart," (Psalm xl. 6-8). How blessed ! God's will was to be accomplished in the salvation of the sinner. Christ presents Himself to do His will ; and so He sets aside the sacrifices of the Law as unable to do this, and establishes the will. "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second," (Heb. x. 9). How this reveals God's heart ! Love to the sinner, hatred to his sins, are somewhat of what we learn in this. It is ~~not~~ the legal thought of our hearts that God must be propitiated in some way towards us. All is changed when we see that our salvation as sinners *originated* in the will of God.

But then, were not the claims of God to be met ? Surely something was due to one so justly offended by sin ; and this brings us to the second point. For, precious and pure and spotless as was Christ, still, of what avail was His life to us without His death ? None whatever. Had He gone away to heaven ere He died, of what avail to us was all His purity ? And so we read of Aaron casting lots between the two goats ; one for the Lord, and the other for the people. Let us remember what this conveys. There are ever two sides to Christ's sacrifice ; its aspect Godward, and its aspect towards sinners. These two goats teach us this. The claims of God's nature against sin must be met, and the need of the conscience of the sinner. The former must be first. The person who has been offended must be satisfied, before the heart of him who has offended Him can be set at rest. And in verse 12th, &c., we read after the scape-goat's blood was shed, on which the Lord's lot fell, that Aaron brought the blood into the Holiest, within the veil, in a bason, and sprinkled the blood seven times on the mercy seat ; and that as he did this the holy place was *filled with a cloud of incense !* Would that the sinner's heart might learn the precious truth conveyed in this ! The fragrance of Christ's sacrifice in all its excellence in God's eyes, filling His holy presence with its sweet savour and rich odour. How well and how righteously can He be gracious to the vilest, when He deals with such according to the merits of Jesus, and the value of His blood ! Valued as making good all God's attributes, fully answering all His claims, and glorifying Him as to sin.

How precious to learn this, however poorly ! My fellow-sinner, it is the sheerest unbelief—a device of the enemy, if you doubt your interest in the atoning blood. Can you doubt it? Impossible. “There is none that doeth good, no, not one,” is the divine complaint. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” is the divine sentence. The moment I see this, the moment I have submitted to the divine sentence, that moment I am fit to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. And here I learn it has spoken on the mercy-seat, that its fragrance has filled the Holy place ; and that God is acting on the ground of the blood, declaring Himself a just God, and yet a Saviour. None too vile to be cleansed. The day of grace still runs on. The blood is on the mercy-seat, wide enough in its aspect for a world of sinners. None are precluded ; there is ample provision for all.

But there is something more. Not only has the blood spoken on the mercy-seat, but Christ has put Himself as substitute in our place on the cross. Jesus left His own place in the glory on high, and put Himself under the weight of our sins ; and God has given us the place of Jesus, and in Him in the glory on high. This brings us to the third point, which we find in verses 20-22. Aaron took the live goat, and confessed on his head *all* the sins, and *all* the transgressions, and *all* the iniquities of the people ; and sent him away by the hand of a fit man, into the wilderness. How the conscience of a godly Jew must have been relieved, when he saw the goat led away ; and still more so, when he beheld the “fit man” returning without him. How his heart must have rejoiced to know with divine certainty that for twelve months all was gone. And, how the resurrection of Christ, like the dismissal of the scape-goat, on whose devoted head *all* our sins, and *all* our transgressions, and *all* our iniquities have been laid, must speak its true story to our consciences, telling us of sins put away, and buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, never to be recalled, no more to rise against us for ever ; but with this difference, that what had its efficacy for twelve months to the Jew of old, pointed to that which gives us now an eternally purged conscience—eternal peace ! so that we are now in His presence without fear, our consciences for ever set at rest by the work of Christ.

What then, is the exhortation of the Holy Ghost, founded on all this, to us ? How are we to do honour to this perfect

title God has given us? "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in *full assurance of faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 20, 22).

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## THE TWO TRIBES AND A HALF.

NUM. xxxii. Jos. i. and xxii.

THE history of the Two Tribes and a Half has its own instruction for us, and illustrates a peculiar character of mind and will among the saints of God. They do not stand with the Lot of the days of Abraham, though in some respects they remind us of him.

It is wonderful what a variety of moral character and of Christian experience finds itself before the soul in the histories of Scripture. The soul reads itself there fully; the workings of nature not only in man, but in the renewed man, its conflicts and its strength giving us to see so much that we know in ourselves; and, at times, the lights and shades as well as the distinctive features are to be traced.

The Two Tribes and a Half are not Lot, but there is that in them which tells us of him. Like him, their own distinct, independent history begins with their eyeing the well watered plains which were good for their cattle in the wilderness side of Jordan. They think of their cattle rather than the call of God, and the pilgrimage of their brethren. Had their hearts been full of Christ, they would not have seen anything till they had crossed the river. Abraham, their father, had never been on that side of the river; nor did their expectation when called out of Egypt stop short of the other side. Neither had Moses said anything about those plains, in the land of Gilead. But they had cattle, and those plains were suitable to their cattle, and they sue for an inheritance ere they reach the land which had been their expectation when they set out. This was all. They had no thought whatever of revolting; of sacrificing the portion of true Israelites, but

their cattle drew their eyes to the goodly plains of Gilead, and they were for *possessing them, though they would do so as Israelites.*

How natural ! How common ! In moral power they come short of the call of God, though they hold to the hope of that calling, and claimed fellowship only with those who were the objects of it. They were not in power a *risen* people ; though in faith one with such. They were careful to declare and hold to their alliance with the Tribes who were to pass the Jordan ; though they were led to remain on the wilderness side of it themselves. I do not regard them, like Lot, a people of mixed principles, who had deliberately formed their lives by something inconsistent with the call of God, but rather as a generation, who owning all that obey it, and refusing all thought of having any other, are not found in the moral power of it.

Again I say how common ! This is a large generation. We know ourselves too well to ask, is there such a people ?

Moses at once is made uneasy by this movement on the part of Reuben and Gad and the Half Tribe of Manasseh. He expressed this uneasiness with much force. He tells them that they bring to his remembrance the conduct of the spies whom he had sent out years before from Kadesh-Barnea, and whose way had discouraged their brethren, and occasioned the forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness. There was something so unlike the call of Israel from Egypt in the hope of Canaan, in all these suggestions on the part of these Tribes, that Moses at once thus resents it : and it is bad that this is produced in the soul of a Moses ; when the first instinctive feelings and thoughts of a saint, who is walking in the power of the resurrection of Christ, are alarmed and wounded by what is seen in a brother. And yet how common ! many a Moses now-a-days is called in spirit to challenge what offenses, as being out of company with the calling of the saints. For many a thing gets its sanction or its excuse from the heart of a saint that cannot stand before the judgment of faith.

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh have to explain themselves, and to give fresh pledges to Moses that they by no means separate themselves from the fellowship and interests of their brethren, and they do this with zeal, and with integrity too. In this they are not with Lot. Lot's conduct separated him for the rest of the journey from Abraham. But not so these Tribes. With zeal they assert their purpose to be still with



their brethren. Nay, they would by no means have taken the Eastern Gilead, had this produced a forfeiture of their identity with those who were to be in the Western Canaan. They are to give pledges too, that they will be foremost in the action which still remains on the behalf of their brethren's inheritance. By no means do they contemplate anything like the loss of fellowship with them; in this they are above Lot. But still they have stopped short of Caanan. They are not in the full power of the Canaan-calling—not in the thoughts of the man of God, a dead and risen people; for they are pausing (ere the promised inheritance be reached) for the sake of their cattle in the wilderness.

Moses, however, does not let them go, as Abraham let Lot go. They are not to be treated in that way, neither does the judgment of God light on them, as on the unbelieving spies who bring up an evil report of the land. They do not belong to such generations, though their way may savour of such. Moses cannot lose sight of them because they propose to feed their cattle in the plains of Gilead, while they thus with zeal assert their purposed fellowship with their brethren. They are his, and he is theirs still, I may say; and they hold on together, unlike Lot and Abraham, who never met after Lot became a citizen of the world; practically forgetful so far, of the calling of God.

This is so; but still Moses has to eye them and remember them, and keep his thoughts somewhat anxiously and uneasily occupied about them. And this is not the best witness for a saint. Happy when the Holy Ghost can have us and our state also, to lead us still onward, and feed us still in the knowledge and with the things of Jesus.

Lot and Abraham never met after the way of the world had drawn Lot into it. Jonathan and David, now and again, and in their affections there is communion between them true and warm. Obadiah and Elijah met only once, and it is but a poor meeting: "*Reserve*" marking the way of Elijah; and "*Effort*" that of Obadiah; for they were not kindred spirits. The leathern girdle of the prophet but ill-assorting with the livery of Ahab; but the two Tribes and a Half are above these. They are still the companions of their brethren, and will not think of anything else; and Moses admits their title without reserve. Their desire to have their portion in Gilead makes no difference as to this. But still they do not go through and through; they do not measure *the whole* of

the wilderness, but they linger; and the thought of their cattle being suited in the fields of Gilead attracts them, and there they find an object, though they still accompany the camp

What shades of difference there are in those different illustrations; what different classes of the people of God; yea, and what difference in the same class do we meet here. Lot and Jonathan and Obadiah are of one class; men of mixed principles, as the expression is; men whose lives are formed by such every day habits as cannot combine with the pilgrim character; or the suffering-witnessing-character to which the call of God leads. Sodom, as Lot's place, Saul's court as Jonathan's, and the palace of Ahab, King of Israel at Jezreel, as Obadiah's; when Abraham dwelt in a tent, David in a den or cave of the earth, and Elijah with the provisions of God at Cherith or Sarepta. And yet Jonathan was not Lot or Obadiah personally, though we have to set them all in one class. Neither was Obadiah, Lot exactly; and as between them as a class, and such dead and risen men as Moses and Joshua, we have to bring in the Rubenites, Gadites, and Half Tribe of Manasseh, a generation who will by no means admit the thought of their separating themselves from full companionship with the call of God; but who, nevertheless, exhibit in moral action that which is not according to the full measure of that call. And this is indeed a common case—nay, this is *the* common case among the saints. We know it ourselves; we own the call, we witness it, we speak of Canaan, of death and resurrection, of hopes and inheritance beyond the river; but nature, and present ease, and present desires, the bleating of the flock, the lowing of the oxen, as they feed in the plains of Gilead, lead to much which makes the more single eye of a Moses, and the more fixed and single purpose of a Caleb or of a Joshua to wonder and enquire. (See Num. xxxii.)

Joshua, who has the spirit of Moses has them in some anxious and uneasy remembrance, like Moses; and he addresses a word of special admonition to them when he tells the conduct of affairs under the Lord, and for Israel. For they are still, being the Tribes, on the wilderness side of Jordan, the occasion of this fear and uneasiness to the more simple and devoted mind of a full-hearted, single-eyed servant of Christ. (Joshua i.)

There remains, however, another sight of them still in the

progress of the history, and one which has its own striking moral features, I mean in Joshua xxii.

The ark had gone over. The feet of the priests bearing it had divided the waters of Jordan, and the ark had gone over conducting and shielding the Israel of God. And it is true that our Tribes of Reuben, and Gad, and Half-Manasseh had gone over with them ; but the ark and Israel had *remained* there—that's the difference. The two Tribes and a Half return, but the ark remains. The place that becomes a ransomed people, a dead and risen people, is left, and they return to *settle* where Israel had but *wandered*.

Joshua, like Moses, instinctively feels all this, and warns them, and exhorts them on their departure. And as soon as they reach the place they had chosen *they* begin to feel it also. They are not fully at ease ; and there is something specially significant in that. They raise an altar—(the heart of an Israelite in the land of Gilead would do just the same at this day). They are uneasy—Jehoshaphat was uneasy, when he found himself in the court of Ahab, and asked for a prophet of the Lord. The renewed mind speaks that language in a foreign land. They raise the altar, and called it "ED," or a witness—a witness that Israel's God was their God. But why all this ? Had they remained in Canaan, where the ark and the tabernacle of God were, they would not have needed this. But they were not there, Shiloh was not in view, nor could their souls carry the sense of it, that Shiloh was the common centre with all their brethren. They have to give themselves some artificial help, to give their souls a crutch, If I may so speak, to aid the confidence and the joy of their hearts ; that as Israelites, they had fellowship and common interests and calling with their brethren. All this is very full of meaning, and is constantly experienced to this day. Some witness of our belonging to the Israel of God is needed and craved by the soul, when we get into a position in the earth which the call of Israel does not fully justify. The countenance of others—the restless examinations of our own state—reasonings with ourselves—remembrance it may be, of better days with the soul—something that is as artificial and of our own device as the altar of ED, and which would have been as unneeded too as that, had the soul been more simple and faithful.

All this is still known, and is all figured here—it is the writing on this pillar on the eastern side of Jordan. And a

wonderful pillar it thus is. Lot's wife, the pillar of salt, had a writing upon it which the Divine Master Himself has read for us ; and I doubt not, so has this pillar of ED, which the Holy Ghost would fain teach us to read, that we may be warned to know what uneasiness and doubt accompanies the soul that has retreated to find a *settlement* there, where the saints are and have been *strangers*. This altar witnessed both *for* and *against* these Israelites. It was just what Jehoshaphat's uneasiness was when he found himself with Ahab and the prophets of Baal. It is just what a saint's uneasiness here is when he finds himself involved in a world that he ought to have left. For all this bespeaks the saintly or renewed mind, but in such exercises and experiences as the grace of God has caused it.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

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To be soundly instructed in the heavenly origin, heavenly position and heavenly destiny of the Church, is the most effectual safe-guard against worldiness in the saint's present path, and also against false teaching in reference to future hopes.

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## "BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH."

MATTHEW xxv. 1-13.

It is a striking and solemn thought that when the cry *at midnight* was once made, it *never was repeated*. The effect of the cry was all confusion amongst the virgins. The wise had gone in somewhere, and they had slept as well as the foolish. They had "gone in," and thus had falsified their true and primary attitude, which we read of in ver. 1, where we read they "went forth" to meet the bridegroom. But once midnight came, a cry was made ; this was full of grace. They did not deserve that they should have been awakened and recalled to their first state of expectancy, still it was given. But it *never was repeated*; and what followed was the confusion, but *midnight was past!* Still, amidst all the confusion, there was a consciousness in the wise virgins that they had oil in their lamps. With them all was well. And

when the bridegroom came, they went in with him to the marriage. The others were not ready, and when they came *the door was shut.*

All this is truly solemn, and the more so when we see how the parable connects itself with the previous one. "*Then shall the kingdom of heaven,*" &c., ver. 1. In such a state of things as we find in the parable of the wicked servant—who said in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming. Mark this; he did not deny that he would come at some time or other, but it did not suit his plans and his association with the drunken, or his assumption of power tyrannising over his fellow-servants. His *heart* dictated his conduct in all this. What has Christendom done but this? Centuries of worldliness and assumption of authority have characterised her; and instead of meat in due season, her effort has been to extinguish the hope of the Lord's return, as an ever present thing, as but ill suited to her. She has brought in all sorts of events to be fulfilled before that. She does not say, He will not come, but puts it off as far as possible from a present, living hope.

In such a state of things, the Lord *has given* the warning cry. Of late years it has resounded far and wide. Opinions have varied, and speculations have been put forth as to the true character of that return. Still, the cry has gone forth—the midnight cry—for it was *at midnight* the cry was made; and it was *after midnight* the confusion, which was the result of it, took place.

Let us look around us in Christendom at present, and see if we cannot discover this very state of things—confusion of every kind. Many of those who profess His name have waked up from the slumber which has crept over the Church for centuries—wakened by the midnight cry.

Reader, are you one of those who have heard the cry? And are you conscious of the possession of that which will admit you to the marriage? I appeal to your conscience before God. Is this so, or is it not? Remember this, *the cry never was repeated.*

*Evil Servant*—"My Lord delayeth his coming."—Matt. xxiv. 48.

*Scoffer*.—"Where is the promise of His coming."—2 Peter iii. 4.

*Christian*—"Come, Lord Jesus."—Rev. xxii. 20.

## "HE RESTORETH MY SOUL."

NUMBERS xix.

IN the leading paper we spoke of atonement and reconciliation to God as the starting point of the believer's course; giving him eternal redemption—an eternally purged conscience—an eternal standing before God. How seldom this is realised! Ordinances, forms, and ceremonies abound; all assuming that a position is to be gained, a relationship to be formed between the soul and God. Christianity (truly as such) teaches this as a starting point; and every Christian duty and responsibility *flows from the position in which the Christian is*. Just as the responsibility of the wife, or the child, or the servant, flows from the position and relationship in which the person is found, and which cannot possibly exist before the relationship exists—so does that of the Christian. His responsibilities and duties and service are never exercised (according to God) to bring him into a relationship, but are the natural fruit and proper result of *being in it*. Dear reader, pause and ask yourself, Is this so with me? I do not question mere sincerity—we find that in the Dervish of India, perhaps, in greater measure, too—but I press the question upon you, What are the works of your hands? Are they the servile works of bondage, or the outflow of a new nature; the goings forth of a realised position in grace? Think of how needful it is to have the conscience purged from "dead works," as well as from sins.

But some have realised it—accepted it by faith as God's gift to sinners, "without money and without price;" and then a natural difficulty often springs up in the mind; "surely I am still in a body of sin, and I find, that much as I abhor sin, its evil root is within, and it shows itself, sad to tell, in the shape of sins. Must I not then go back to have my conscience purged again and again every time I feel the stain? Such a thought shows that we have never understood the full value of the sacrifice and work of Christ, in which we stand (who could realise this?) but we have never realised it for our settled peace of soul. The Jew of old committed a sin, and brought a sacrifice; and again a sin and a sacrifice,—and the Lord's own people often lower the sacrifice of Jesus, unintentionally perhaps, to the level of that of the bulls and goats of old. And every time they

feel the stain of sin (indeed often in a general way without feeling it at all—a practice so deadening to the conscience), they have recourse, like the Jew with his offering, to the blood, over and over again for cleansing. Now we remember how we said, that in figure of old, and in fact in Christ, the holy place was filled with the cloud of incense when the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat by the high priest, on the day of atonement. This beautiful figure informing us how precious beyond all thought or conception was the sacrifice of Jesus to God; filling heaven itself, the antitype of the holy place, with its fragrance; so much has the glory, and honour, and majesty, truth, righteousness, holiness, mercy and love of God been magnified and honoured by the sacrifice of Jesus dying to put sin away. The blood has spoken on the mercy seat, its fragrance has filled the holy place. God has, Himself, dealt on the ground of its value in his eyes in justifying the believer. But His child has sinned, and feels it too, blessed that he should do so; and he feels that as long as the sin is resting upon his conscience, he cannot lift up his head in unclouded confidence, and enjoy the light of God's presence as he ought. How then is his soul to be restored? How is he to learn the preciousness of that beautiful word, "He restoreth my soul?" Must not the blood still be applied to cleanse away the stain.

In the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers we find a precious figure of God's provision to meet this need—that His people may not go on with uncleanness or defilement—and that His jealousy about the smallest stain of sin in His people should be manifested. It has a precious meaning voice, too, in the place we find it in the book which tells of the wilderness journey of the people of Israel. We find it there alone. The things which happened to them were for examples or types to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come (see 1 Cor. x. 11). The believer is one who has been redeemed, and is passing through a wilderness world to his Canaan in the heavens—his rest; and Num. xix. gives a figure of God's gracious provision for the defilement of the way which he may contract through carelessness, and which would naturally hinder his fellowship with the Father and His Son.

We spoke before of the spotlessness of Jesus, God's spotless Lamb. The spirit of God delights to glorify Him thus. "He shall glorify Me," said the Lord when about to depart

to His Father. We have His estimate of the person of Jesus here in this chapter, too, in ver. 2, under the figure of an unblemished heifer, "*wherein* is no blemish, and *whereon* never came yoke" of sin. And then we have the perfection of His work on the cross in ver. 4—the meeting place between God and the sinner; as the Tabernacle of the congregation was between Jehovah and Israel, where the brazen altar stood, "There will I meet with the children of Israel," said He to Moses, in Exodus xxix. 43. The blood of the heifer was sprinkled there seven times. Seven is the number used in Scripture to show the perfection of anything in a spiritual sense. Like as the fragrant incense filling the holy place on the day of atonement speaks to our hearts of the perfection of Christ's work, so does the mystic "seven times" tell us of perfection here. And the whole body of the sacrifice was then burned to ashes without the camp; even so Jesus suffered without the gate (Heb. xiii. 12.) The heap of ashes, dear reader, has a voice for the renewed mind; it tells us of our loved Lord and Saviour, as it were consumed to ashes for sin under the fire of the judgment of God. When we ponder such words as these, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Ps. xxii. 14, 15), as coming from the soul of Jesus on the cross, we can understand, in some small measure the sinless sufferings of the Son of God—sufferings for the lightest thought—the thought of foolishness—which is sin (Prov. xxiv. 9) which we have committed; and we can gaze in adoring love on Him who alone could exhaust the righteous wrath of God, and satisfy the claims of His holiness. But how truly blessed to know, too, dear reader, what the ashes proved. They proved that the sins which he bore are gone, consumed to ashes, never to be recalled. The fire could do no more with the victim than to reduce it to ashes, it had exhausted its strength in doing this, and it could do no more; and the fire of judgment could do no more with Jesus, He satisfied all its demands for ever.

But you will say, what has this to do with my case, when I have sinned through carelessness or the depravity of my nature? I feel sure the blood has spoken on the mercy seat, but I feel too, that the cloud is upon my heart; and I



cannot enjoy the light of my Lord's countenance and His perfect love. Surely you cannot, "He that touched the dead body of a man shall be unclean seven days" tells us that, as completely as the blood had with seven-fold perfection spoken before the tabernacle of the congregation; as completely had the Israelite of old become ceremonially unclean. And as completely, to use the figure in your case, have you lost your communion with God. Must I not, therefore, return to the blood, you will say, to have the stain removed? No, dear reader, this is not God's way to restore your soul. With the Israelite, the answer was plain. There was no need for a return to the blood; but a clean person took running water, and the ashes of the heifer, and sprinkled the unclean person the third and the seventh day, and he was completely restored. Now, the water is the word of God, applied by the power of the Holy Ghost to the conscience. "Ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you" (John xv. 2); "That he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word" (Eph. v. 26), are Scriptures which explain this clearly to us. The word testifies, by the Spirit, of the fulness of the sacrifice of Christ; its efficacy to all who believe; of the eternal putting away of sin. The believer knows this; but his feet have become defiled, and his soul needs to be restored. The word of God discerns the thoughts and intents of his heart (Heb. iv. 12); and the Spirit turns him in upon his own heart to take knowledge of the sin, and convicts his conscience; when conscious of this, and that he has lost his power of enjoying the presence of God in the light, the Holy spirit then applies the word of God, which speaks of the complete putting away of this very sin, as of all which Jesus bore on the cross, to his conscience; and grace tells its own triumphant story, bringing home to his heart, bound in the sense of the perfect grace of God, the consciousness of the sin being gone—the cloud which dimmed his sight removed; and his heart springs up, again into the full joy of his position, his communion perfectly restored by the hand of the good Shepherd; who while jealous at the least soil on His people's consciences, in their practical ways ever charges Himself with restoring them. "If any man *sin*, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." He who has been Himself the propitiation for our sins, and has put them away; and who lives to keep us in the bright consciousness that He has done so. "He that is washed needeth not some

to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John xiii). This washing is by the word. "The washing of water by the word," bringing us back to the consciousness that the righteousness in which we stand is unchanged.

Now I ask you, dear reader, Will the thought that Jesus charges Himself thus to restore your soul—or, would the thought that the heap of ashes was ever ready, laid up outside the camp for the Israelite—ever make you careless about contracting a soil or stain? If ever you have known what it is to enjoy fellowship with the Father and His Son; to have the love of God flowing through your soul, you will acknowledge that it is utter misery to be without it. I am sure that many, many of His own people through unbelief or worldliness, have never enjoyed this. I know, too, that if they once tasted it they would thirst, and thirst for more. But this communion is marred by the smallest stain of sin—the light thought of vanity or folly. The Holy Spirit who dwells in them is grieved; and instead of filling their hearts with the love of God, He turns them in upon their own hearts, that they may feel the stain, but the moment the soul is bowed in confession of it to God, the same Holy Spirit brings to their remembrance the thought of Christ consumed to ashes, as it were, for this very stain; proving that the sin is gone—grace has told its own victorious tale, and the soul springs up again in the happy consciousness of restoration, and with an adoring heart to the grace of God that has triumphed thus. The faithfulness and justice of God are at stake. "If we *confess* our sins he is *faithful* and *just* to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9).

May my readers learn to walk in the light of His presence, enjoying their portion; communion with the Father and His Son; with consciences sensitive as to the least soil or stain that the light makes manifest. Not a morbid conscience, ever seeking to accuse itself—ever an unhappy companion. But a conscience sensitive of the least touch of evil, and thankful for the provision of His gracious love, that when the stain is felt, and the soul bowed in confession, it may enjoy the deep preciousness of that word, "He restoreth my soul."

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"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purify-

ing of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who though the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God," (Heb. ix. 13, 14).

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Q. M. T. P. writes—"I should be glad if you would say a few words on that text in Romans, 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' Do the accusations of the enemy, and of our own hearts, work together for our good? They are not pleasant to bear. In what way do they work for our good?"

A. The passage supposes the consciousness of the perfect liberty of grace in which as believers we stand—"No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "The law of the spirit of life . . . hath made me free from the law of sin and death."—"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit."—The Spirit dwells in us, and "witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God." If children, heirs, &c.; but we are not yet in possession of the inheritance, except as knowing it ours; and we find ourselves in a groaning creation; still subject to the effects of man's sin: we are linked to it by a body still subject to death, while waiting for the adoption, to wit, its redemption. Our souls have been redeemed, our bodies are indwelt by the Spirit, which links us with heaven; as the body links us with the groaning creation. We have been saved in hope of the glory that comes, we learn in patience to wait for it; and in such a state of things we *do not know* what to pray for as we ought, but the divine feeling produced in our hearts by the Spirit, expresses itself by a groan, which cannot be uttered; but into which the Spirit enters, and God, who searches the hearts, finds in us the mind of the Spirit, who "makes intercession for the saints according to God." In such a state of things, although we *do not know* what to pray for as we ought, we *do know* that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Your question, "Do the accusations of the enemy and our own hearts work together for good" would not have place here; because the enemy has been silenced for ever as to our

acceptance with God. God Himself has proved Himself "for us," and has justified us, so that the Holy Ghost asks in verse 33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" There is none,—“Who is he that condemneth?” There could be, nay is, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.—As to the accusations of our own hearts, we have nothing to satisfy us in them; if we had, it would be a bad sign. We know that no matter how deep the discovery we make of the depths of our hearts, Christ has been under it all, and has put it away for ever. We don't think badly enough of ourselves. Once we have discovered that there is no "good thing" in us, and with the full knowledge of what we are, Christ died for us, and that He has delivered us completely and for ever; we begin to think *not at all* of ourselves—we get *done with ourselves* altogether. The Spirit, who dwells in us, is grieved with the slightest shadow of failure or sin, and does not, nay could not, for the time, lead our souls into the enjoyment of our place and portion. He turns us in on our own hearts that we may see the evil and exercise self-judgment as to it; this we may confound with the "accusations of our own hearts."—The verse then shows us, that in such a state of things around us, God makes *all things* work together for our good (a precious consolation in the midst of trial and difficulty)—and so our heart is kept at rest: in the consciousness that His ends are accomplished in and for His people.

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The word of our Lord, and the attentive ear of the true servant, are all we need to carry us safely and happily onward.

The *little* ones in God's school are still *living* ones, and must be cared for.

The *present* portion of the saint is to be ever in the *true tabernacle*, and to be there with a purged conscience. He is *never* an *outside* worshipper, nor an *uncleansed* one.

✓ The word servant is as inseparably linked with obedience, as work with workman; a servant must move when the bell rings. The proper language of a servant is, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

# "M A N N A."

JOHN vi. 14-21.

IN the verses above we have a vivid picture of the present dispensation, which is characterised by the absence of Jesus from his own, while he exercises His High-Priesthood in the Heavenly Sanctuary; and by the circumstances in which they are found below.

The multitude whom He had fed with the barley loaves and fishes, attracted because they had eaten of the loaves and been filled, own Him as the great Prophet whom Moses had promised that the Lord Jehovah would raise up amongst them (Deut. xviii. 18, 19); but it was only with their outward senses they had thus owned Him, and the Lord perceived, and in their carnal zeal, they would take Him and make Him a King. This could not be—He could not take His place in kingly glory by the carnal will of man, and He departed from them, and went up into a mountain alone. His nation was unfit to have God's King amongst them, till the time when the Lord could take that place in virtue of redemption, and until there would be a moral fitness in their hearts to receive Him. When Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" they replied, "We have no king but Cæsar." They rejected their Messiah, and His crown was placed on His cross,—“The King of the Jews;” and like His departure from His disciples to the mountain alone, He went away to the Heavenly Sanctuary to be a “Great High Priest” for His redeemed. Meanwhile they are, as it were, left alone in a little ship, toiling towards the land of their destination, aiming at, but not attaining their object—surrounded by the seas and stormy winds of circumstances—unable to accomplish their purpose, “for the wind was contrary” but watched over by Him. He joins them miraculously, and their object is attained—the shore is reached, the danger past, and Jesus with them personally once again.

All this is truly blessed, but we learn something still more blessed in the remaining portion of the chapter. We learn what Jesus is as His people's portion, first to impart life, and then to sustain it here below during their toilsome and dangerous journey, while he is rejected by the world and absent from them. We learn this under the figure of the

"Manna"—"the true bread from heaven." "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." (John vi. 32, 33)

When the Lord Jehovah redeemed Israel out of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness, we find that they learned what it was to hunger—(Exodus xvi.)—and in their murmurings to reproach the Lord for bringing them forth out of Egypt, where they had eaten bread to the full. In answer to their murmurings, the Lord, in grace, provides a portion for their daily food. He gave them the "Manna"—the bread from heaven. What a precious thought we find in Deut. viii. 3, "He *suffered* thee to hunger, and fed thee with Manna." The Lord does not always *prevent* the trials and sorrows of His people in the wilderness way, but he makes them the very occasion of supplying the need or of giving them something better. "He *suffered* them to hunger." Want of faith in Him says, "Egypt's food would have been better than hunger in the wilderness." But see what He provides—bread from heaven—angels' food. This need always draws forth from the resources of God.

The children of Israel "gathered, some more, some less; and when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered *much* had nothing over, and he that gathered *little* had no lack: they gathered every man *according to his eating*: . . . and they gathered it *every morning*, every man according to his eating." (Exodus xvi. 17-21.) Each appetite was fully supplied—those that could eat largely had a full supply, and those whose appetite was small had all they could partake of. How blessed to have a large appetite for such heavenly food; to feed daily upon "the true bread from heaven," the Son of the Father—an humbled Man here below—nothing outwardly great—no form of comeliness in the eyes of the world—but one who entered into every sorrow in fullest sympathy, bore every trial, passed through every difficulty which His people should experience, learning obedience by the things which He suffered, that He might be able to sympathise with them as one who truly felt it all. Do our hearts feel the slights of a cold proud world? Jesus felt them to the full. Do we desire to be humble? Who so humble as He? To be meek. Who so meek as He? To be in our measure peace-makers or heralds of peace. Where such a peace-maker as Jesus, the Prince of Peace? Do we hunger and thirst after righteousness? Who can enter into

the desire as Jesus? In every circumstance He can feed and sustain our souls, but we must feed upon Him. He is the Father's gracious provision for our souls, but He must be fed upon. The hungry soul it is who relishes bread, not the soul who has had enough. The more hungry it is, the more will it appreciate the gracious supply. The natural life must be sustained with provision suitable to it, and the spiritual life must be sustained too. The hosts of Israel had no supply around them in the wilderness; their food came down from God. The renewed soul finds that there is nothing in this wilderness world to satiate its spiritual cravings, and it must look up to heaven for its supplies from the hand of God. The natural life must be sustained day by day; it cannot eat in view of a future day; each day's supply must be given to sustain the life of nature. And so with the new man. He must feed day by day on Jesus—must live on Him and by Him. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; and so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." He lived by the Father when He was in this wilderness world; the believer lives by Him during his journey here. "I live," said Paul, a saint who well knew what the thorns and briars of the wilderness were—"I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) There is no use trying to feed upon Jesus in view of the need or the trial of *to-morrow*, or of the *next day*. When Israel gathered more than enough for the day's need of the manna, it "bred worms and stank;" it was useless. And so, if the believer seeks to lay up *to-day's* food, to sustain his spiritual life and support him through the trials of *to-morrow*, it will be like Israel's manna, unfit to support life. Jesus must be fed on by the day, according to the appetite and need of the hungry soul. The manna, too, was gathered early, before the sun was up; "when the sun waxed hot it melted." When the journey was commenced—the day's march entered on—there was none. The slothful Israelite who did not gather his portion had to endure hunger; his neighbour's feeding was of no use to him; each should feed for himself. But the man who knew his need, and counted on his day's toil, rose early and gathered a good supply; and so, feeding on his supply, he was strong for the way, while the slothful man had no portion.

How all this speaks to our souls. The diligent soul, whose hunger makes him rise early to provide for his need

has his plentiful meal on Christ, and is prepared for whatever may come across his path through the day. May the Lord enable my believing reader to hunger for this heavenly food—the sustenance for his soul, provided by *His* hand who “satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” (Ps. cvii. 9.)

How often in the journey, when there is no appetite for the manna—no hungering after Jesus, the true bread from heaven—the *heart* turns back again to the flesh-pots of Egypt. How often “the vanities of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things,” find an entrance into the heart, which thus turns practically back to Egypt, trying, perhaps, all the while, to feed upon Christ as well. It is impossible that the two natures of the believer—for he has two natures, the “old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” and “the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness,” (Eph. iv. 22, 24)—it is impossible that both can be in vigour together. Either the new man must be asleep, sunk down amongst the dead-to-God of this world, and the old nature, in energy and vigour, feeding on the flesh-pots of Egypt. Or the “new man” must be strengthened with all might, growing up in conformity to Jesus, its pattern; and the old man kept in subjection and death, getting, practically, the place and portion which God gave it in Christ on the cross. It is impossible, therefore, to feed both natures at the same time; and a useful practical question for the believer, with regard to all that he occupies himself with in the world, is, “Which of the two natures am I now feeding or sustaining by this?” Of course, this does not refer to his necessary employment in the world, for he must eat and drink those things that are necessary, and toil and sorrow, it may be here.

When we read of their turning in heart back to Egypt, in Num. xi., it is very sad. And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.” The flesh remembers its comforts and its luxuries, but forgets the while its cruel bondage under Satan’s power—and the heart turns back thus, practically, into Egypt,



How is it with your heart, my reader? Are you hungering for this heavenly food? or does your soul loathe this light bread? Has the bread of God become distasteful to you, and are you in heart craving the pleasures (so called) and the food of Egypt, forgetful, all the while, of the cruel bondage under the grinding hand of Satan, which all they of that land endure?

There was a golden pot of this manna laid up in the Ark, that Israel might see the bread wherewith God had fed them in the wilderness. (Ex. xvi. 32.) It was the "hidden manna." How precious this is to the faithful soul, that, in the times of ruin and spiritual declension, Christ promises that it shall eat of the hidden manna, as a suited reward for its faithfulness here! When we find the church at Pergamos sunk down from being in the position of a "chaste virgin, espoused to Christ (2 Cor. xi.), to having her dwelling where Satan's seat is, even in, and of the world (Rev. ii. 12-17), and where evil was allowed, and all was ruin and wretchedness, the faithful overcomer, who had abstained from eating meats offered to idols, is promised that he will have the "hidden manna" to feed upon—the remembrance of what Jesus was once here, in a wilderness-way, and in a time of ruin and departure from God: His Nazariteship was perfect and undefiled. The soul realises and feeds upon what He was in the midst of it all.

When Israel got into the land of promise, the manna ceased, and they fed upon the "old corn of the land that same year." "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year" (Josh. v. 11, 12). The circumstances in which they had needed this heavenly supply were passed: they had entered upon their possessions, and they partook of the proper food of that land when they had crossed the Jordan into Canaan.

The Christian needs to feed on Christ in both ways. He is walking in a wilderness, and needs his daily spiritual portion from God's hand; but the manna is not the proper food of the heavenly country; he is raised up with Christ and has entered into his heavenly possessions by faith, in Him. The food of that heavenly country is Christ glorified, He is the "old corn" of the heavenly land, and, as risen with Him, the Christian must set his affections upon, and

seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God—feed upon these things by faith. He will find that he requires the manna, too; for he cannot enjoy always to the full his heavenly portion while passing through the wilderness here.

May the Lord give a keen appetite to my reader for his portion, whether it be that suited to the wilderness way, or the "old corn"—the fruit of his heavenly Canaan. The more he feeds upon this food, the more will be hunger for it, and the food of Egypt will be increasingly unpalatable; and, with his soul filled with Jesus, there will be no turning of heart back to Egypt, and longing for the flesh-pots of the land of his former slavery.

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### "BE YE RECONCILED."

2 COR. v. 20.

I was struck yesterday, on entering the meeting room at D——, by the appearance of a man whom I did not remember to have seen there before. Throughout the service he listened most attentively, and when the people began to disperse, I could not resist placing my hand upon his shoulder, with the inquiry.

"Have *you* peace with God?"—"No," was the reply, "I cannot say that I have."—"Well," I said, "my friend, I am sorry for it; but I feel sure I am right in supposing that you would wish to have it."—"I would, indeed," said he.—"Well," I said, "do you believe that you are by nature a lost sinner?"—"We are *all* that," said he, "and so, of course, I am one as much as any one else."

"Well," I said, "then if according to your own confession, you are a lost sinner, you assuredly require a Saviour; and does not the word of God tell you that one has been provided for you, and that if you now believe on Him, you are eternally saved?"—"Oh, but," he said, "surely it's not so easy as all that. Have not I got something to do *on my part*? Of course I believe, and always did believe, that Jesus died for me, but *I must help*."—"Oh——," I said, "and now do tell me what *could* you—a poor sinner, consciously dead in trespasses and sins—*do* to help?"—"I could *pray*," said he.—"Well," I replied, "prayer is very blessed in its

proper place; but did you ever notice (opening my Bible) this passage in 2 Cor. v. 20, in which God is *praying you* to be reconciled? Now, will you tell me what you are praying for?"—"Why, of course, for that very thing, to be reconciled," he said.—"Oh, but," I answered, "this passage plainly states that God, on the ground of the accomplished work of Christ, is now entreating you and sinners like you to be reconciled to Him. Where, then, is the wisdom of *your* asking *Him* to be reconciled to you?"—"Oh, but," he said, "I don't believe that I could be reconciled to God without asking for it."—"Then," I said, "I have only to assure you that you are sadly mistaken. God, as the 20th and 21st verses so plainly state, has *anticipated* your petition by Himself sending to ask you to be reconciled; *for* (or because) He has made Christ to be sin, and now, instead of asking, you have simply to *believe* that Christ has been made sin for you, and you are instantly reconciled to God, 'made the righteousness of God in Him.'"—"Well," he said, "I never saw it in that light before. That's quite new to me, and I'll think over it and come and hear you again."—"If the Lord permit," I replied, and so we parted.

And now, my reader, this way of looking at *the most important question in the world* may be quite new to you also; but it is nevertheless blessedly true that, as we read in Col. i. 20, the Lord Jesus has "made peace by the blood of his cross; and, therefore, God is now in a position, consistently with His own truth and holiness, to 'come out and entreat' (Luke xv. 28) poor sinners to draw near to Him. This He did, *first* by His Son, *next* by those who heard Him (Heb. ii. 3), and *now* He is doing it by those whom the Holy Ghost hath sent forth (Acts xiii. 4) as "ambassadors" or heralds to declare the glad tidings that "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Does not the poor blind mendicant at your door cease *his* cry of want the moment he hears your welcome voice pressing a sixpence on his acceptance? *It is what he wants.* He receives it thankfully, and goes away rejoicing. Why should not *you*, dear praying one, pause in your petitions for a moment to listen to the voice of God praying to you to be reconciled to Him on the ground of the finished work of Christ? Why should not you, even as you read this, give thanks to Him, believing that you *have* redemption through His blood, "the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace?" (Eph. i. 7.)

A mind at perfect peace with God ;  
 Oh, what a word is this !  
 A sinner *reconciled through blood*,  
 This, this, indeed, is peace.

Reader, may this peace, unchangeable as Christ is changeless (Heb. xiii. 8) be yours ; but oh ! remember the solemn warning : “If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, . . . how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.” (Heb. ii. 2, 3.)

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### THE WISE WOMAN OF TEKOAH.

“FOR we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again : neither doth God respect any person ; yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him.” (2 Samuel xvi. 14.) These words of the wise woman of Tekoah convey to us a deeply precious truth—precious to the poor sinner who has learned his own misery and helplessness, and who wants to learn God’s redeeming love to his soul.

Before we enter upon the truth conveyed to us in the verse, we will look at the scene which gave rise to the words.

Absalom, the son of David had committed a greivous sin in the murder of his brother Ammon. To be sure, Ammon had committed a great crime, but Absalom had no right to murder his brother, in avenging his sister’s wrongs. Absalom had fled away to Geshur, and was there three years, and his father David’s heart longed to see his son ; his heart had been comforted concerning the death of his other son Ammon. Joab was Absalom’s friend, and saw that the king’s heart went out after his erring son ; and he got the wise woman of Tekoah to feign herself to be a mourner, and one who sought the king’s help in her own need. When David decided her case, she said that he spoke as one who was himself faulty, because he had himself a banished son, whom he had not fetched home again. The result of the scene was that King David gave command that Absalom should be brought home. He sought to act like God in this—to do what God alone can do—and the result was that his throne was cast down. He gratified his own heart’s desire at the expense of the righteousness of his throne. His heart was gratified, but his

throne was cast down. For Absalom, soon after his return, conspired against his father David, and David soon found himself an exile from Jerusalem, and his throne in possession of his revolted son. (2 Sam. xv.)

It is God's own right, dear reader, to do this alone. It is our privilege to *forgive* one who injures us until seventy times seven. (Matt. xviii. 22.) But while acting thus in grace, we cannot *justify* the person who has injured us. The law can condemn the guilty sinner, and act in perfect righteousness in doing so. The king can *pardon*, in royal clemency, the culprit who is about to be executed, but he cannot *justify* him. He can set aside the law in the exercise of mercy, but he cannot justify the criminal. God alone can do that, and in such a way, that His throne is not cast down as David's. He has devised means that His banished be not expelled from Him. This is not *merely* the exercise of sovereign mercy. In God's blessed way for bringing the sinner to Himself, "mercy rejoices over judgment;" and God's way of saving sinners is on a basis which has established the glory and the authority of His throne.

In the verse which tells us of this, we find the poor helpless sinner aptly described. One who "must needs die"—the thought of death will come in betimes, when the sinner's heart would try to be lightest, and bring its chill shudder over the soul, as to what will be its fate beyond that boundary. Death came in by sin; it proves the existence of sin; and the wages due and earned for sin is death, not only of the body, but of the soul. "The second death"—the "part in the lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone . . . is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.) "It is appointed unto man once to die, and *after* this the judgment." (Heb. ix. 27.) "And I saw the dead stand before God, . . . and the dead were judged . . . according to their works, . . . and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was east into the lake of fire." (Rev. xx. 12-15.) It is the inevitable fate of all men in themselves, as responsible before God. How aptly is the utter helplessness of the sinner described in those words: They "are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." Poor sinner, what could more aptly describe you? what could more forcibly figure your weakness and irrecoverable state? Have you not betimes to cry out of the depths of your heart for a deliverer? When you think that God gave

His law, which showed you the way to leave your state, and promised you life in doing so, and that you never availed yourself of His remedy and when you have tried, you have failed ; failure after failure only making your weakness more apparent—your heart more desolate than before? How willing we are to confess how ungodly we are—*ungodly* sinners—but how unwilling to confess that we are *without strength*—“as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.”—If we only once came to the discovery that we are truly and utterly helpless, we would be glad enough to be cast over on Jesus, and then we would find Him a mighty Deliverer. If you are thinking still that you have even one straw, as it were, to grasp at, you have not given up that one straw, and owned yourself undone. As long as we have one reserve in our hearts—one idea of “doing” for salvation—we have not come to the full consciousness of our utter weakness ; and so long as we are in this state we are morally unfit to learn the means God has devised, that His banished might not be expelled from Him.

Let us think on that word “banished.” When did that word come in? In the third chapter of Genesis when God “drove out the man.” God had made Adam in innocency in the garden of Eden, and he fell from his state of innocency, and never can return. When innocent, he did not know good and evil. When he fell under Satan’s power, he received his conscience—his knowledge of good and evil—and he never can be innocent again. God “banished” him from his presence—from the earthly Paradise he had given him—and he has lost that state for ever ; what, then, is he to do? He never can get back to Paradise ; and where is he to go? He was “banished” from the place where a good and blessed God had placed him, and that for ever ! But God did not give him up, although He could not allow him to return, and so, instead of restoring him to *Paradise*, He brings His righteously banished creatures to *Himself*. How, then, is this to be done? The wise woman of Tekoah tells us that “*God* has devised a means.” It began in *His* thoughts. Christ carries out His will—He comes Himself from the bosom of His Father, and goes down into the very place of weakness, in grace, under the power of death, in which, poor sinner you lie, and this in such divine love. Satan wields the power of death ; death comes in by sin ; Satan has power thus over the sinner. Jesus was perfect and sinless, and

therefore, Satan had no power over Him, not even the power of death. "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath *nothing* in me." (John xiv. 30.) And yet He went down into death. Man was as water spilled upon the ground—weakness itself. Christ goes down into the place of death, "the dust of death." "*I am poured out like water*" were His accents in the place of death and sin-bearing on the cross (Ps. xxii. 14). The cross was the weakness of God, and it was stronger than man (1 Cor. i. 25). Jesus was "crucified in weakness" (2 Cor. xiii. 4). He made good, and proved and glorified every expression of the character of God—perfectly glorified Him, as to your sin, in the work of His cross. God now acts on the ground of this, to bring the poor sinner, who was under sentence of eternal banishment, to Himself—not restoring him to Eden, but bringing him to Himself in Jesus Christ." "The just died for the unjust, that he might bring us *to God*." (1 Pet. iii. 18.) He brings those who were righteously banished to Himself; not as David did Absalom. When David gratified his heart's desire in bringing Absalom home again, he did so at the expense of his throne. His throne was soon cast down. God does not act thus. He brings them to Himself on the ground which has established the righteousness of His throne. He does not bring sinners to Himself with their sins, but displays His love in bringing them to Himself but *without* their sins. Man can act in pardoning grace in forgiving his enemy till seventy times seven times, but he cannot justify him at the same time. Hence the force of those beautiful words: "A *just* God and a *Saviour*; there is NONE beside me." (Is. xiv. 21.) There is surely "none beside Him." Thus, dear soul—bowed down, it may be, with a load of sin—has God done for you in Christ. He desires to give you rest and peace in your soul; desires that you should enjoy the blessedness and the consciousness that you have been brought to God in Christ—as near as He. Do you believe this? Have you set to your seal that God is true? This is faith, to believe what He says. "When we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. v. 6.) Again, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5.)

Dear fellow-sinner, is it not blessedly simple, *His way*—the way that God has devised that "His banished"—the

poor sinner whom He could not allow to remain in the earthly Paradise here below—"His banished," might not be expelled from Him, in the heavenly Paradise above? He gives us a better place, a better portion, as poor sinners saved by His grace, than we should have had, if Adam had retained his place, in the garden of Eden. And all this He does in virtue of the work of Jesus, His Son. How happy to be thus the objects of His boundless mercy; happy to be the objects of His perfect love; happy to know that we are not only saved, but saved in righteousness, by One who alone could say, "A just God and Saviour; there is *none* beside me." "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; . . . to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be *just* and the *justifier* of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 24-26.)

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## A THOUGHT FOR THE LITTLE ONES.

How little are any of us able to say "*I know him in whom I have believed.*" All Christians believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, in His work and person, but how few ever seek to *know Him*, how few hearts are really set on learning Him.

Many are seeking to serve Him, and even spending their substance for Him, who forget that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." People will give up money and time to "*serve the Lord*" who have never given up a thought, or restrained a word to *please Him*; and why is this? because they do not know Him! The little one who knows Him, whose heart is set on knowing Him, thinks of His feelings, His desires, and tries to suit himself to them with a greater carefulness and a brighter devotion than the most showy services ever evince; because such an one is thinking everything of Christ, and nothing of himself.

Our acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ is what forms us as Christians, for we are not born again, to a religion, or to a doctrine, but unto eternal life, and this is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. This life is in God's Son; and its expression in us is according to our knowledge of Him who is its source



and supply. If I know Him simply as one who has saved me from eternal judgment, my walk will express only that. If I know Him as the one who has redeemed me from this present evil world unto Himself, I must walk as one not of the world, not my own but His; and further, if I know Him as one who has *died out of this scene, and passed into another*, there may be weakness (and the higher we go, the more we shall discover it), but I must walk as a heavenly man, and consequently as a stranger here, as one who likewise has died out of this scene, and lives in another.

If this be true, how deeply important that we should seek to know the Lord Jesus Christ. To set out from day to day with the simple aim "that I may know Him." Not to do great things, or to feel great things, but to know the greatest thing of all, even Him in whom all fulness dwells. It is the highest aim for the youngest babe, or for the oldest saint, and the little one who *starts* with it, will find a pathway through this world that angels delight to look on, and where the Father and the Son find their abode.

As the disciples walked with Jesus through the scene of his rejection, amid confusion, discord, and disease, was not every occasion a new opportunity for them to learn Him? If they met death they might learn Him there, suffering, bereavement, famine, storm, the occasion might be small or great, but Jesus was there for them to see and learn Him, though their hearts were dull and careless as ours often are.

But now we know that it is the great end of our blessed Lord's own ministry to us by His Spirit, even as it is His chief desire for us, that we might be "conformed to Him;" and it is only by knowing Him that we can ever be, "when we see Him we shall be like Him," and if we want to know Him, let us go to the Gospels and linger over His ways and words, and acting there, get into company with Him in His weary passage to and fro among rejected men, as the Son of the Father, and the servant of His God; and then remember that it is the *same One* who says, "Behold I am with you *always*," and who is with us to be learned and recognised, and known in every step of our poor little hidden, secret paths through this great world which is against us, just as it was against Him—to be known in every occasion, to endear Himself at every turn. Do we look for Him? Are we seeking to know Him in order to be conformed to Him? Is this the work He will find us about when He comes? Many do

great works in His name, but it is only the child who knows Him truly who can possibly set its true value on the surpassing privilege and blessedness of being counted worthy to serve our blessed Lord and Saviour in this present evil world.

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### THOUGHTS ON SECOND PETER.

IN his first Epistle, Peter contemplates a great deal of outward trial and sorrow to the Church, but in this his second Epistle, the evils he adverts to are of a different character, and they are two in number : the first (ch. ii. 1), that of false prophets or teachers, bringing in heretical doctrines, and the second (ch. iii.) that of scornful men, rebuking the promise of the Lord's return. It is therefore the purpose of this Epistle to preserve the minds of the saints, whether it be from practically denying the sovereignty of the Saviour (ch. iii. 2), or from scorning the promise of his coming. Neither of these things would bring on the saints reproach or persecution, but they would test the state of their souls in the presence of God. The first Epistle depicts outward trial of every form and fashion, and provides strength against it ; this rather points out the danger to the soul of a relaxed and impure condition of spiritual life.

We see men here (ch. iii.) reducing everything here to mere cause and effect. "Does not the sun shine to-day as it did yesterday?" "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We live in a time when the soul needs security from dangers of these kinds; when there is great relaxation and indulgence given to nature, and little practical cultivation of the profession we make. Thus in the last two verses of this Epistle, we are exhorted to beware, "lest being led away with the error of the wicked we fall from our own steadfastness," and likewise that we "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus;"—that is, grow in all the personal and lovely graces of the Spirit, and make the word of God the counsellor of all our thoughts. Such I take to be the moral of the whole Epistle—for beloved, we should be so in communion with (v. 4.) "the exceeding great and precious promises," conveying to us the mind of God, that we should get into our hearts these

same dispositions and tempers of the divine mind, so, *in this sense*, to be "partakers of the divine nature;" for this passage does not at all relate to conversion, but to the imbibing and drawing in through the feeding on these "promises," the mind and disposition of Christ, in the knowledge of whom we are exhorted to grow (ch. iii. 18).

And what a fine order and condition of soul is here contemplated, having the very same tastes, the very tact (so to speak) of the Lord Jesus! And this is just what we want.—If we cultivate this fine order of spiritual affection, we shall surely be kept quite apart from the wretched traffic around us. The more we are made "partakers of the divine tempers of mind," the more securely shall we be carried through the dark and perplexing scene our eyes behold. It is not by abstraction—by shutting ourselves up from it—that we shall gain strength, but by being transformed into this habit of soul, through contemplating the pattern mind—God's mind: "changed into His image" etc.—and then coming forth to practise these things in the midst of the ruin and desolation around us.

And the apostle says "Be diligent." Surely, beloved; for does not this call for diligence? Do not, however, think you must needs be busy and active, in order to bring forth fruit to God. Most blessed this in its place! and one would desire to bring forth more and more, but it is in especially cultivating the charities and affections of the Spirit in the soul, the passive habits and virtues of Christ, that fruit to God is brought forth. What a beautiful husbandry this! And how full of blessing, one to another, were we continually so occupied, would our goings out and comings in be, day by day, and hour by hour! We should be more occupied in cultivating our affections for Christ, and if this be not going on every day in the soul, the whole moral system is at a loss. There is no recollection of the cross, no proper anticipation of the glory, where "*these things*" are not cultivated and prized.

And beloved, ought we not to welcome such truths as these? Our whole lives should be a witness that we are sailing into the kingdom with a full course; with a favourable tide and wind. Were we all diligent after this manner how greatly would it be to the comfort of our own spirit, and that of our brethren. And we should not walk diffidently of one another; but give each other the blessed assurance that we are the elect of God; our whole life being

the expression that it is so, and that we are getting "an abundant entrance" into the kingdom.

Ch. i. 15.—And does not the Spirit give great value to these admonitions and warnings. "That after my decease ye might be able to have these things *always* in remembrance." And surely we will not say the times are fallen out to us, so that these things are less necessary to be remembered now than then. If ever there was a time, beloved, when there was a relaxed state of morals in the professing Church, surely it is now.

May we then feed continually on these "exceeding great and precious promises" to be "partakers of the divine nature" to cultivate and increase it. And how happily at the close of this Epistle, does the apostle expand to us the very core, and centre, and heart of these "promises" by what had been disclosed to him in the Holy Mount. "My own eyes," says he, "were the witnesses of it, when I was with Him in the day of His glory."

This letter, beloved, is not written simply to them, to whom it is peculiarly addressed; but it is to *you* and to me, in order that by communion with these "exceeding great and precious promises," *we* also may get more into the divine mind, and commend ourselves one to the other, as those who are "making our calling and election sure," and "growing in grace," and "in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And as the days are indeed evil, may we be driven more and more into our "hiding-place," *there* to learn, and there to cultivate all these blessed tempers and dispositions of the mind of Christ. It is surely rowing against the tide, and we must be *diligent*—but "let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

## "IT IS FINISHED."

"It."—What? The atoning work—the propitiatory sacrifice—the perfect work of the Son of God. *That* by which alone, God can save from wrath—the work for sin, for guilt, for ruin, for cleansing. That which makes nigh—which brings to God—which makes peace—which gives a divine title to heaven—which perfects the conscience—which reconciles to God—on which every blessing is founded—which has

satisfied the claims of the throne of God—which has glorified God by the settlement of the question of Sin.

“IS.”—Not “will be”—not “may be”—not “may possibly take place”—not in the *future*—not even in the *present*; but in the *past*. It was true 1800 years ago; and leaves no room for a present work to be wrought, or ought in the future to be performed. It “*is*” done once, and for ever.

“FINISHED.”—Complete—accomplished—perfected—nothing to add—nothing to make up—no tear to shed—no sighs to heave—no feelings or experiences essential. The work is finished; all is settled; claims all met; debts all paid; God glorified; sin atoned for; justice satisfied.

“IT IS FINISHED.”—Blessed words! The dying utterance of a dying Christ. “It is finished;” sinner, there is life for thee in those words. There is salvation for thee in those words. There is forgiveness and cleansing from sin for thee in those words. Those three words contain fulness of redemption, fulness of blessing and future glory to be revealed. They are the expressions of the completeness of the work, that form the basis—the ground of all God’s dealings toward thee. “It is finished,” are words which contain the truth of what has made heaven sure to thee, with its joys, its glories, its pleasures. Ah! you will need an eternity to understand their deep and precious meaning. It will only be as you gaze upon the lamb who was slain, and think of His decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem, that *that* divine utterance will unfold its depth the more to your wondering soul.

Reader, have you trusted your all upon this matchless work of grace and love?

## THE TWO TRIBES AND A HALF.

NUM. xxxii. Jos. i. and xxii.

(Concluded from Page 16.)

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, are challenged the second time—by Joshua here, as by Moses before; because of their pillar here, because of their seeking the plains of Gilead before.

This is all natural, as common as Christian fellowship is, but all more or less painful and troublesome now-a-days as it

was then. A great stir is made among the Tribes; and a great assemblage is formed to enquire into this further.

Something appeared in the eye of them who were on the other side of the river, which alarmed them as Israelites, as worshippers of Jehovah. It looked to be something which the common call of God could not allow for a moment—it must at least be explained. What a living picture this is! Are we not at home here? Do we not scan this spot well?

The calling and the election of those eastern borderers was not made sure to their brethren who were living in the place of the Ark of God. They have to enquire and inspect their condition; and whatever the result of such inspection may be, the need of such a process is but a poor thing at best.

I believe the first Epistle to the Corinthians is very much an Eleazar crossing the river to look after a pillar. There were things at Corinth which alarmed Paul. They seemed to be reigning as kings in the earth; his ministry in the meekness and gentleness of Christ was getting despised. The world was fashioning the hearts of saints there; and people were valued because of their place in the world. "The princes of this world," the men of the schools, or the ways of the schools, were regaining their place, and saints were returning to *settle* where they ought to be *unknown* and *strangers*. Paul, in the zeal of Joshua xxii., had to cross the river; and whatever the discovery may be, the action is a painful one, and the need of it a sad one in the history of the Church.

The Tribes may satisfy Eleazar more than the Corinthians did Paul; all these varieties are known at this hour: but there is this common sorrow and humbling, that the call and election is not made sure: and we have either to take journeys, or to occasion journeys, to have our own ways and ED.'s, and altars, as brethren, read; instead of reading to all the secrets of God's altar and tabernacle at Shiloh!—J. G. B.

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When the world has lost its power in principle over us, then we find that inequality of position only serves to draw out affection; not to make an equality.

God ever treats us according to what He has already given us—treating us as though we realized it all.

An Assembly which has not the Truth of God for the condition of its existence is not an Assembly of God.

## H E A V E N.

My heart is bounding onward,  
 Home to the land I love;  
 Its distant vales and fountains,  
 My wistful passions move.  
 Fain would my fainting spirit,  
 Its living freshness breathe,  
 And wearied steps find rest, in  
 Its hallowed shades beneath.

No soil of nature's evil,  
 No touch of man's rude hand,  
 Shall e'er disturb around us  
 That bright and happy land.  
 The charms that woo the senses,  
 Shall be as pure as fair,  
 For all while stealing o'er us,  
 Shall tell of Jesus there.

What light ! when all its beaming  
 Shall own *Him* as its sun !  
 What music ! when its breathing  
 Shall bear *His* name along !  
 No change, no pause, its pleasures  
 Shall ever seek to know ;  
 The draught that lulls our thirsting  
 But wakes our thirst anew.

LAW.—Prohibition, requirement, curse.

GOSPEL.—Gift, grace, blessing.

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Q. N., Glasgow.—Asks, (1,) Baptism ; what does it mean—death only—or death and resurrection ? (2,) Does the 6th chapter of Romans teach Baptism in water ? and what is the teaching in that chapter ?

A.—(1.) In Baptism one is always baptized *unto* something. In Christian Baptism, as many of us as are baptized *unto* Christ, are baptized *unto* death. We are buried with Him by Baptism unto death (Rom. vi. 4). The thought of resurrection follows, in coming up out of the water ; but is not the

primary thought of Baptism; which is a going *unto* death; we are baptized for death—The thought is buried and death.

(2.)—In Rom. vi. the Apostle refers to Baptism of water to show that in it the person had gone to death, and that it contradicted the thought that one might consider himself alive in a sinful state, so as to continue in sin, that grace might abound. The chapter fully refutes the unholy thought that the full, free, boundless grace of God, which constituted the believer righteous by the obedience of another, (ch. v. 19, 21) is a principle of sin. The argument is, that if we have part with Christ *at all*, we have part with one who has died to sin and who is alive to God. We have died with Him, and we cannot be alive to that state to which we have died—we cannot be alive to sin, and dead to sin at the same time; the objection contradicts itself. Our Baptism was *unto* death. When Christ died, He died *unto sin*, He was, in His death, discharged from it. He came out of the position to which sin attached as a substitute. Alive in resurrection, He has nothing to do with sin, and lives to God only. We should then *consider* ourselves dead to sin—having come out by His resurrection from the sin to which He died—and as alive to God only; in a state outside the former, and so walk in newness of life. *We* have a right to do so, because He died *for us*. The subject of the chapter is practice, not standing; and in the allusion to Baptism, he gives us God's thoughts, as to what Christian Baptism expresses.

## "THE EPISTLE OF CHRIST."

2 COR. iii. iv.

THE apostle uses a remarkable expression in chap. iii. 3, where he writes, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the *Epistle of Christ*, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." What is an Epistle of Christ? and how do we become such? are questions I would desire to speak of for a while.

Alluding to his ministry, Paul says, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of



all men." We may here remark that when Christians passed from one assembly to another, they were accredited by letters of commendation; commending them to the care and love of the assembly to which they came, and showing that the bearer was then in the fellowship of the saints. Paul asks, "Do we need again to commend ourselves?" By his ministry he had done this to their conscience in the sight of God, and had been the Lord's instrument in gathering together the assembly at Corinth. *He* did not need to commend himself a second time; nor did he need a letter from them to others, as they themselves were his letter, in whom his ministry from the Lord could be plainly seen. But they were more for they were also *Christ's letter*, or epistle, ministered by him, written by the Spirit of the living God in the fleshy tables of the heart.

Such, then, is what an assembly of Christians should be; Christ's commendatory letter to the world around; the grace and truth of Jesus Christ should be so plainly written upon them, as to be known and read of all.

And, moreover, as assemblies are composed of individuals; *each Christian should be, in his measure, "Christ's epistle."* His walk and conversation such as to commend "Christ" to those around him. Not a mere outward reformation in practice, but the heart inwardly right before God, and the fruit outwardly before others, every action—every thought coming in the power of the Holy Ghost from "Christ" engraven on his heart within.

How, then, you will say, my reader, is such an end to be attained, that you may be Christ's Epistle, or commendatory letter to the world? Perhaps you are one who can see and appreciate the beauty of such a calling, and yet you feel that you have another question to settle before you could aim at such—that until you learn the cleansing of your conscience, and the putting away of your sins, you could have no leisure of heart to seek to become the "Epistle of Christ." Well, dear reader, I am about to unfold to you as the Lord may enable me, how both ends, may be accomplished in you; that you may learn not only to know and rejoice in the complete and perfect putting away of your sins, but also that you may have the aim of your heart directed aright to become an "Epistle of Christ."

The apostle in the remainder of chapter iii. contrasts two things, "The ministration of death," and of "condemnation,"

and "the ministration of righteousness" and of "the spirit." Or, in plain terms, he contrasts the Law with the Gospel. He says, "If the ministration of death written and engraven upon stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" He refers to the circumstances which occurred in Exodus xxxiv., when Moses returned the second time from the top of Mount Sinai, with the two tables of the law in his hand; the skin of his face shone, so that Aaron, and the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold his face for the glory of his countenance; they shrank away from the glory, and begged him to put a vail over his face. And Moses did so; he put a vail over his face when he talked with the children of Israel, and took off the vail when he went in before the Lord. Why was it, that the children of Israel shrank away thus from the glory in Moses' face? Why was it that they could not endure to look upon the feeble ray of glory that was reflected there? Simply because that **GOD WAS DEMANDING RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM MAN!** And feeble as was the ray which shone in His servant's face, they felt that God had a right to claim righteousness from them, in the righteous claims of His law. They felt that they were unable to respond to His righteous demand, and that if He dealt with them on this ground they must perish, that they had "*Come short of the glory of God.*" They had been alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and they died, it was the sentence of death in their consciences before God. This ray of glory brought out the solemn truth that man *was a sinner*, and nothing else. The law demanded that he should *not* be a sinner, and only revealed to him his desperate condition; and that he had no righteousness for God. If it only told him what he *should do*, we could understand that it gave the commands of God to a creature who only needed to have his heart directed aright; but when we find that it not only told him what he *ought to do*, but *forbade* the evil and lusts of his heart, which had departed from God, we can understand in some measure the force of the word, "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 20) not "sins," but "sin," the root of evil within. Thus it became a "ministration of death" to the sinner, because he was to live in keeping it; and, "If there had been a law given that

could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law." (Gal. iii. 21.) It forbade the lusts of a heart which was full of lust—required righteousness where there was nothing but sin—and in consequence entailed a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) Man would evade his responsibility if he could; or try to mingle it with mercy—soften down its stern demand, blunt its keen edge, which has searched his heart and convicted his conscience, or he would try to fly from it altogether if honest, and hide its glory behind a veil. It demanded that he should love God with all his heart, but it gave him no object to love, or to produce the love it required in his heart. God who demanded his love was hidden behind the darkness and terrors of Mount Sinai, as afterwards behind a veil. As many (therefore) as are of the works of the law, (that is, endeavouring to live on this principle before God) are under the curse; and therefore it is impossible that it can make a man the "Epistle of Christ."

- But when we turn to Christ we find another thing. We see God, manifest in flesh, here below. He who had been, under the law, in the position of a RECEIVER, if man had any answer to his righteous demands; now assuming the place of a GIVER! Let us turn to the well of Samaria, in John iv., and behold Him there, seated in weariness and thirst, asking a sinful woman not for *righteousness*, but, for a *drink of water*! The heart rests, and gazes with wonder on such a scene! It tells us that God had descended from the Fiery Mount, and assumed another position now; not that of *Demanding*, but of *Giving*! "If thou knewest the *gift of God*," and how He has humbled Himself so deeply as to be indebted to a poor sinful woman, whom the world despised, for a draught of cold water; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. (John iv. 10.) Sin had deprived her of every pretension to righteousness; as well as of strength to use the law; and here at the well of Samaria we find Him revealing Himself to her as a *Giver*. Winning back her alienated heart to the God against whom she had sinned—following her to the far distant country where sin had driven her from God; and revealing Himself without the terrors of Mount Sinai, in absolute and perfect grace! Yes, beloved reader this is what we need—Here we learn somewhat of the force of these words. "God

was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself not imputting their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. v. 19.) Would you not desire to be a *receiver* from Him of the gift of God, not a *doer*? The heart rests in this wondrous One, and is attracted from its hiding place by a God of perfect grace—One who truly searches your heart to its deepest depths—convicts your conscience, but who, nevertheless, has won your confidence, and set you at ease in His presence. A convicted sinner, and the Judge of quick and dead, face to face without an upbraiding word!—"Come and see a man which told me *all* things that ever I did," reveals to us a heart laid bare to the springs of evil within: and yet who has no terror for us—for He has won the confidence of our heart to the God from whom we would fain have hidden, if such were possible, the secret springs of evil within. He has adapted His heart full of perfect goodness to our need—His presence there tells us that without this revelation of Himself we were lost: and that He has assumed the place of a seeker, because we would never have sought Him. We had sinned away the blessings with which He had surrounded us in creation; and He could not permit us to retain them in sin, and so had driven us out of them; and to such a position we never can return. The heart rests in the thought that it has seen God face to face with a self-ruined, convicted sinner; having nothing for her but absolute grace! Waiting upon her slowness of heart, without a reproachful word—forgetful of His own thirst, when occupied in awakening a thirst in her soul for the Living Water. Fellow-sinner, wilt thou not "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace?" (Job. xxii. 21.) Does not this sight of Jesus satisfy your heart and give you rest? Has He not won the confidence of your heart, when turning over the secret and blotted pages of your life; and at the same time giving you no motive for concealment—no motive to hide anything from Him? The Truth "of your condition which He came to reveal stares you in the face, forcing you to condemn yourself—while His perfect Grace" has not condemned you, or expelled you from Him. Have you not then, I would ask, learned to trust Him, and have the boldness in His presence with grace, which does not condemn you for your sin, bestows? He does not identify Himself with your sinful state, although He has come so near, (that he did on His cross); but while perfectly pure Himself, He has taught you that you may unburthen your weary heart to Him;

when you could do so to none other. He brings you into God's presence, and proves the perfection of His love has revealed itself in Him toward the sinner, when in righteousness He has had to condemn his sin.—And how?

To see this, we must follow Him to His cross. The perfect love of God would not flow forth to you at the expense of His righteousness; and if righteousness were to be executed against the sinner, it would but call into question this perfect love. All had to be proved—perfect love to the sinner, perfect righteousness against his sin. We must then follow Him to His cross to understand this—to His cross where "He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. ix. 26.) There all came out—the sin of man's heart, and his hatred to God and good, burst out in its fullest expression in the rejection of Christ. "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause." (Jno. xv. 24, 25.) But the very thing which expressed the fullest hatred of our nature against God, was only His occasion in doing that which wiped out our greatest sin! And Jesus—capable, as none but He, of bearing the fullest expression of divine judgment on account of sin in drinking the cup of wrath, exhausting it so that none remained—we follow Him to His tomb, from the tomb to the morning of resurrection, from the morning of resurrection to His ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and then we see "the glory of God shining IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST," a man at God's right hand! No longer now IN THE FACE OF MOSES, over which we much desire a vail may be placed. Every ray of that glory tells its wondrous tale. It tells us that the sins He bore on His cross are gone; that He has entered heaven as the purger of our sins; and that He has left them behind Him, paid the full penalty for them, glorified God about them, and put them away; gave up the life to which these sins were attached, in which He stood charged with them; and that they are buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness—righteously buried and forgotten—according to the righteousness of God. Every ray of that glory speaks the blessed news that before God the sins are gone; and the glory that shines in His face has shone into our hearts,

giving "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"And we all with unveiled face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed (transformed) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) We are able, now, stedfastly to behold that glory, by faith—no need to shrink from its brightness. Quite right that we should shrink from the glory which shone in Moses' face, owning its full, uncompromising, condemnatory power. No need to shrink from that which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. The brighter the ray, the more fully do we see our sins put away. Thus it becomes to us the "ministration of righteousness" and of "the Spirit," not of "death and condemnation." It tells of God's righteousness in justifying the ungodly; sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God, by the Holy Ghost given unto us. "Christ," in whose face the glory shines, is written upon our hearts, with the Spirit of the living God, and the believer becomes the "Epistle of Christ, known and read of all." "With unveiled face, beholding," he is "transformed into the same image from glory to glory." And "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." No more the bondage of a soul under Moses—the groaning of a heart whose desires are right, but which possesses no power to bring forth fruit to God; but liberty—the liberty of grace, enabling the believer to be filled with the fruits of the righteousness which he possesses, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. (Phil. i. 11.)

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 7.) The earthen vessel—our poor, vile body—has not yet been changed into the likeness of His glorious body (Phil. iii. 21), it has not yet been clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. v. 4); and, therefore, as the frail vessel would lend itself to every evil around, we have to learn to "bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," to bring the power and judgment of His cross to bear upon all that is of the poor vessel, "that the life also of Jesus (His risen, victorious life—the treasure which we possess) may be manifested in our body." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) The more the vessel is kept under, every movement of nature, and flesh, and self judged, the more will the life of Jesus be at liberty to be manifested in our bodies.

God helps, too, to this end—and "we which *live* (the believer), are always delivered unto *death* for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor. iv. 11.) Paul had a thorn in his flesh given him to keep the vessel in the consciousness of its weakness daily, lest it should have been puffed up by the abundance of the revelations given to him. Each believer has his own special danger, and requires the special dealing of God on the vessel to keep it in the place of death, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 7.) Thus death works in the poor, frail vessel, setting free the life within to act towards others, to His glory.

"Seeing, then, we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." How? "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

I ask, then, my reader, is the gospel of Christ's glory hid from you? Satan is, in religious things, the god of this world. His every effort is to hinder one ray of this glory finding its way into the hearts of men; he blinds the minds of them which believe not, lest one ray should shine into their heart. He knows that if the feeblest ray of that glory finds an entrance into the heart, his power to delude and to blind the soul is gone. The soul that has apprehended the feeblest ray is lost to Satan for ever. And to follow to its source the ray of glory, it is found to come from the face of Jesus Christ, who took His seat on high, "when He had by Himself purged our sins." (Heb. i. 3.)

May God, who spoke the light out of darkness of old, shine this glory into your heart, and enable you, my reader, with upturned eye and unveiled face, to gaze by faith into the heavens, and behold Him, in whose face God's glory shines, seated there as the purger of your sins! And then, may you learn to forget those things that are behind, and press forward unto those things that are before, toward the mark for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ! Meanwhile learning to reflect His image, and shine back upon the world, "Christ," whom it has rejected, and be in your measure His "*Epistle*, known and read of all!"

## "MEDITATIONS."

How Christ sustains me in the world during His absence.—JOHN xiv.-xvii.

WE are on the earth, and we belong to glory, and are going to it. We, therefore, require to know our Lord, and how He is present with us to help us in passing through the world, and also how He leads us into apprehension of our ultimate position in Him apart from and out of this world.

On the earth our hearts are necessarily "troubled" if He be absent, unless He fills up or supplies the absence: but this He does, and *how* He does so is detailed in John xiv. Our Lord being absent, lost to sight, faith alone can connect us with Him; *Divine* faith, as we believe in God. If this be weak, all apprehension of Him, and what He is to us in His absence, must be weak. It is the connecting link, and therefore, we can understand how faith in the Lord Jesus is largely insisted on in the Epistles. The Spirit fills our souls in answer to it. (John vii.) It is through believing on Him that His provision for me on the earth during His absence is made known to me. Now the first thing I learn is that He has prepared a place for me out of it. He has gone to the mansions of the Father, there to prepare a place for me. This is a *necessity* of love; for if He who loves me so much be gone away, He must, in leaving me, reckon on having a place where He can have me with Himself. How reassuring therefore, to my heart to know that He has prepared a place for me; and that He will, without fail, come again and receive me unto Himself, that where He is, there I may be also. What a wonderful and effectual deliverance from the trials of the place I am in, to know that a place outside of it is prepared for me by Him who has so loved me! I can then connect myself in hope and feeling with my new and happy place, and dissociate myself accordingly from this place that I am in.

The next thing is, that He makes known to me the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The sense of Almighty power and care is made known through Him to the soul; therefore, it is added, greater works than these shall he that believes in Him do, because he goes to the Father. The Father comprises supreme care and power. Christ makes Him known to the believing one walking on the earth, adding, in connexion therewith the practical manner in which we learn it, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name (you would not ask in His name if you did not believe in Him) that will



I do (power here I apprehend and not a mere gift) that the Father might be glorified in the Son." If I pray to Him, He Himself, in reply, will work in me in order to assure my heart of the Father. The Father is thus glorified in the Son. Almighty care and protection are made known to me in this scene of difficulty where I am. In dependence on Him I shall know His power. If I ask anything in His name He will do it, though he be absent. If He be everything to me I shall know His power acting for me.

Then in verse 15, there is, I apprehend, a turn to us. He had been describing what He was to the believing one. Now, it is said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" and then he tells, of the service of the Comforter, who, when He comes, will make us know that He is in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us. What deep and wonderful resource for the heart in this sorrowful world! And then follows that He will manifest Himself unto me, if I love Him; for if I love Him I keep His commandments. Love is always obedient, if it be true, for it confides; and there is no confidence apart from esteem. He cannot manifest Himself if I do not keep His commandments. He could not keep company with the unholy and disobedient. But if I love Him I keep His words, even more than His commandments, and His Father will love me; and they will come unto me, and make their abode with me. The society of those who entirely interest me, invest every circumstance around with interest peculiar to themselves, and their interest becomes mine. But when the greatness, and goodness, and light, and love, and care of God, in personal nearness and relationship, are made known to me, my heart must have abundant resource in the scene, however trying. And, therefore, it naturally follows that I have the Lord's peace in it.

Christ's love is perfect love. My past occupied Him. My place on earth and in heaven occupy Him. In chaps. xiii., xvi., He is occupied with the present, my course on earth; in xvii., with the future, my present entrance into it while on earth. In chap. xiv., it is His provision for myself individually, in my own heart assuring me of a place prepared by Him, to which He will bring me, of the Father made known to me, the blessing of dependence, the Comforter, and, finally, the Father and Son abiding with me, their *Society*. While in chap. xvii., the Lord places us in the hands of the Father to keep us from the evil of the world, and in unity

of mind, oneness in purpose and action, "that they may be one as we are," sanctified as He is sanctified, reaching up to the desire of His heart to be with Him where He is, to behold His glory, and thus He concludes, I have declared thy name (as in ch. xiv.), and I will declare it (as now) that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. The Father's love to Christ comprised present interest and future glory. That love which sustained Him in all His course of sorrow and trial down here, is the love which He would now declare unto us. He alone and apart from every one, fed on and rested in this love, while He walked here below. No one could bear Him company. It was a solitary, untrodden path in every way, but not so far as we are to know the love He knew, and He will be with us, for He adds, "and I in them." The Father's love to Christ comprised present interest and future glory.

May we understand and enjoy our inexhaustible resources in Him who has so loved us.—S.

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### "AT PEACE WITH GOD."

DURING one of the most severe thunder storms that had visited G——, where I was residing some time since, it happened that I had stopped to converse with a man in the street; and as the rain was falling in torrents, we stepped into an unfinished house for shelter. While standing in the window watching the fearfully vivid lightning, and listening with solemnized feelings to the crashings of the peals of thunder, he remarked to me, "What a precious thing it is to be at peace with God at a time like this." Having through God's unspeakable mercy and grace, been given to know in my own soul the priceless value of "Peace with God," I was enabled at once to unfold to him the full and perfect redemption there is in Christ Jesus for all who believe. For long we stood and conversed on that vital and precious subject. I found he was a child of God, but that like many others, he had not been brought to see that the Blessed One, in whom he had put his trust, had "made peace" with God for him: had completely and entirely perfected the work which he came to do; and now tells us in His word that "He is our peace;" (Eph. ii. 14,) that He had made peace by the blood of His Cross (Col. i. 20). So

that instead of having to try, as so many do, to make their peace, with God ; it is and has been done as perfectly as it could be, more than 1800 years ago on the cross of Christ. "Peace be unto you," (John xx. 19), were almost His first words, after He had risen from the dead ; after having wrought the work whereby he might pronounce those precious words. Did He leave His disciples in doubt or uncertainty as to the ground on which He could do so? By no means. "He showed unto them His hands and His side," (John xx. 20,) bearing the tokens of the finished work, whereby he had a right to speak of peace, full and complete as He Himself had made it.

Reader, You may be a quickened soul in God's sight, and yet still be in uncertainty as to your peace with God. Still going on with the thought that you have something to do in making that peace which you so long to enjoy. Let me affectionately ask you, Had the disciples anything to do with those holy but sorely wounded hands? Had they anything to do with that pierced side? No, beloved reader, further than that their sins (as ours) had caused them, and made them necessary. *He* Himself had suffered *alone* for what was *our* due for those sins, so that his loving and compassionate heart might be able to give us that peace which He had wrought. Blessed be His name, we have no more to do with making our peace with God, than with doing anything else toward our salvation. It is all from, through, and by Him. Flows from the full, free grace of God through Him. Our part is to believe.

Then comes the difficulty one hears so often expressed, "If I am at peace with God, how is it that I do not enjoy it more?" This is another thing altogether, dear reader; this is a question as to *enjoyment* of the thing—not as to the thing itself, as to our portion and possession of it. It will be found that it is by looking at our own wicked, sinful hearts, and expecting to find somewhat there on which we can rest as a ground of peace. This causes the want of enjoyment of peace. If we by faith take *God's* view of the case—believing that Christ *has made*, and *is Himself our peace*, the scene is completely changed. Our position before God and by faith is so perfect that, "as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John iv. 17). And further, we find that He must change in His position and acceptance before God, before our position and acceptance can change. This is

impossible, for we know that it is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.) It is just as impossible for our peace with God to alter, as for Christ Himself to change.

And now, my dear reader, Are you at peace with God? If you can say, yes! then blessed and happy is your lot; worlds could not equal in value your portion. But ah! if you are one who has trusted in Him in some measure, and are still in doubt and uncertainty as to the possession of this "Peace;" I pray you, continue so no longer. No longer say in your thoughts, if not by your words, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, *I will not believe* (John xx. 25). No longer act as Thomas to the dishonour of the word of the Blessed One, who has done all, and completed the work, by which He is able now to pronounce to your soul this "Peace." Thomas' unbelief could not alter the fact that Jesus had given them "Peace;" but he lost the enjoyment of it in his own soul for the time. "Thou wilt keep him in *perfect peace*, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah xxvi. 3).

But, ah! dear friend, have you refused to trust in that blessed Jesus who has done so much for you of His own free grace and love? If so, well may you fear and tremble when God, whose love and grace you cast from you, displays His wondrous power in thunderings and lightnings. But of how little moment are these His wonders of nature, when compared with the thunderings and lightnings of His great wrath, which will be poured forth on this world; and on those sinners who have refused His grace and love, slighted the offers of His great mercy. Now is the day of salvation. "Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). We know not how soon it may end, how soon "the Lord Jesus may be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." (2 Thess. i. 7-9.) Delay no longer, I beseech you, as you value your immortal soul. Think how much and how wondrously God loved poor sinners, when He spared not His own, His well-beloved Son. The heavens ring with joy over one sinner that repents. Jesus is glorified when a

sinner believes in Him; each one adds new lustre to His already resplendent glory. Will you not do so? God is glorified in the glory of Jesus.

May God in His grace own this little word; by the grace of His Holy Spirit, for Jesus' sake. Amen.—G. S. P.

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## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM AS PRESENTED IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

THERE is nothing more certain, than that the Holy Ghost has a distinct and different object in each Gospel. John shows us Jesus the Son of God; Luke, Jesus the Son of man; Mark, Jesus the true and faithful Servant; but in Matthew, we have Jesus the Messiah, King of the Jews, the Son of David; and here alone we have consecutive moral history of the presentation of Jesus as King, and his rejection; here alone have we the principles of the Kingdom grouped together and prominently developed (as in ch. v.-viii.) and the characteristics of those—the remnant, who became heirs of the Kingdom, when it had been rejected by the mass. And up to the xiii. chapter, the Holy Spirit gives the moral history of that rejection, as it becomes more and more manifest; the hatred of the Jewish leaders waxing more and more intense against Jesus, until He rejects them; and in the xiii., announces the new thing about to take the place of the Kingdom, as originally preached to the Jews in the iii. and iv. chapters. It is the Kingdom still, but in such a form as was never before revealed, hence called the “mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens.” This chapter gives us a parabolic history down to the end—the harvest, and this in a two-fold view; the external thing, as viewed from the point of man’s responsibility, and the precious—the hidden thing, as viewed from the point of God’s sovereignty and grace, and which is indeed the fruit of His love. After this we have other pictures of the Kingdom, not as a whole, but in illustration of certain peculiar features, and of its aspect at certain different epochs. But in all these succeeding chapters, every incident and fact serves to set forth some principle relating to the Kingdom and its heirs, and the treatment they meet with from those who are not heirs; in a word, developing the character and manifesting the works of

those who, although within the external limits of the Kingdom, are not found in the hid treasure, or the pearl of great price; and, whether they were the Jews of our Lord's own time, or Gentiles, and were professors at the present time in Christendom, they have ever been the revilers and persecutors of the small but blessed remnant.

The xiii. chapter, as regards the Kingdom, is the turning point of the Gospel. The previous chapters prepare the way for it; the succeeding ones develop its principles.

Before meditating upon the parables in the xiii. chapter, let us consider a little the course of the rejection which leads to it.

About thirty years after the announcement of the birth of Jesus, and the legal proof that He was the sole heir to the royal house of David, the herald appears preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." The days were come—the time was fulfilled.

Here was the precursor foretold by Isaiah. The King Himself on the scene. The Kingdom itself near. And this was no strange cry to the Jews; the coming Kingdom was the object of their hopes. Daniel had predicted it as being the last and greatest; it should last for ever. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

Now, John says, "The kingdom is near." The four empires had had their season. Nebuchadnezzar's image was then in full view. The stone cut out without hands was there—what remains? How comes it that instead of the universal peace and blessing which follow the establishment of the kingdom, the kingdom itself, and, consequently, all its blessings, are postponed? There was an element in John's preaching for which the Jews, as a nation, were wholly unprepared. They were called to repent. But they would not. But there would be no admission into the kingdom without repentance; and so it was withdrawn. All this was certainly foreseen by God, and the predictions concerning the kingdom go beyond the circumstances of that time. Nevertheless He who gave the words of the prophecy had so wisely given them, that if the Jews had then repented, God's word would have been fulfilled. But the kingdom was to be brought to them

—offered to them,—and they were and are, responsible for rejecting it. But at this moment, nothing of this was seen; on the contrary, there is an apparent readiness to obey the summons. “Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the country round the Jordan, and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.” They go to John’s baptism of water as a sign of their repentance, and to this external rite, there was a general submission. To this the flesh can submit, even Pharisees and Sadducees go to be baptized. But John warns them that there is One coming after him who, mightier than he, will baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire. The fan is in His hand, and he will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into His garner, but burn the chaff with fire unquenchable. And things were now come to a crisis. “The axe is applied to the root of the trees.” Fruits worthy of repentance must be produced.

But, though nominally the people of God, they were, morally, far from Him—“Lo Ammi.”—They would have been glad to have had deliverance from the Gentile oppressor, but they ignored all the moral qualities necessary for the Kingdom, and so all their notions about it, though founded upon truth were only carnal. And when tested by the presence of Jesus they utterly failed. No mere baptism by water—no feigned humiliation here—He baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with fire. To this the flesh (man) *cannot*, and will not submit; and the kingdom, as appears later on, is taken away.

But not only does John proclaim the kingdom near, Jesus Himself (in iv. ch.) announces it, and in the same words as John. The one is a voice from the wilderness, but Jesus dwells among them, goes about the country, teaches in their synagogues, heals every disease and every sickness among the people. We instinctively feel how appropriate it was that John should preach in the wilderness, and Jesus in the towns and villages. Here was the grace and condescension which marked the whole course of Jesus, which He came to secure by His own death; there was the separative spirit of righteousness that could not dwell amid the evil haunts of men, but must summon them out away from all their old associations to the desert where alone John could address them, fit place for the confession of sin.

Only one could go into their midst and be undefiled.

Only one could mingle with them, be present at their feasts, their wedding feasts, and yet be separate from sinners. John authoritatively demands repentance, and threatens that every tree that brings not forth fruit worthy of repentance shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. Jesus also preaches repentance, but He is there to give the repentance He demands. John is separate both as to food and clothing, and even as to habitation (true, we find Him afterwards in Herod's palace, but his function as the fore-runner had then ceased): Jesus ate and drank with them, and had no garb to distinguish Him from others. But the result after all was the same. They said John had a devil. They said Jesus was a gluttonous man and a winebibber. So that if one came mourning they did not weep: if another came piping they would not dance. There was no response.

There was a divine necessity that Jesus should come in grace. God had determined to set up the kingdom, and had a perfect right to demand righteousness from the Jews, as a basis upon which to found it. But there was none. Grace comes and prepares a basis, *i.e.*, calls out a remnant. But if grace now founds the kingdom, the King Himself acts in grace; and so even at the very beginning, before the rejection was manifest, and while repeating the very summons with which John came, it was with tenderness and compassion that He went out through all their towns and villages, healing them of whatsoever disease they had. •

John did no miracle—stern and austere, he was outside all; Jesus, full of grace as well as of truth, meekly submitted to all their insults and contumely, while working miracles for their healing, and at the end suffered death itself from their hatred and malice.

O wondrous grace of God in Christ, who meekly came and submitted to the dreadful wickedness of man. O what love that bore it all and went down to death, even the death of the cross!

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In Hebrews, faith is looked upon as an active principle of endurance and conduct; reliance on God's word through grace for practice. In Romans, the ground on which we are justified, in virtue of Christ's work, the ground of peace. In the former it is the active-working faith of the saint—in the latter the no-working faith of the sinner.



The world is not now in a state of probation as some suppose. The Gospel comes to the *lost*. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

CONSCIENCE.—The sense of responsibility united to the knowledge of good and evil. When awakened it has no power of drawing near to God; but drives a man away to hide himself, like Adam, among the trees of the garden.

The profession of Christianity in distinction to the law is, that God has spoken *from Heaven* by His Son—the Apostle of our profession; and that we now have a High Priest in Heaven who has while on earth accomplished eternal redemption by His own blood-shedding.

## T O - M O R R O W .

"Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matt. vi. 34.)

Does each day upon its wing  
Its allotted burden bring?  
Load it not besides with sorrow  
Which belongeth to the morrow.  
Strength is promised, strength is given,  
When the heart by God is riven;  
But foredate the day of woe,  
And *alone* thou bear'st the blow.  
*One thing* only claims thy care;  
Seek thou first by faith and prayer  
That all-glorious world above,  
Scene of righteousness and love;  
And whate'er thou need'st below,  
*He* thou trustest will bestow.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Q.—"A correspondent would be glad to know how far the doctrine of the "Perseverance of the Saints unto the obtaining of eternal life" is borne out by the passage, "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of redemption," or Jesus Christ.

A.—The passage (Phil. i. 6) shows the *perfect* confidence there was in the Apostle's heart, that God who had begun a good work in them, that is, the spirit of devotedness to the interests of the Gospel (v. 5) as all other precious fruits

which he saw in the Philippians, would continue it until the day of Jesus Christ. His confidence was sure, because it was *God Himself* who wrought in them, both to will and to do, of His good pleasure (c. ii. 12.) And these fruits which he had seen were the proof of the existence of the eternal life which God had implanted in their souls. Just as their cannot be the *fruits of righteousness*, till the righteousness is possessed (c. i. 11); or the *fruits of the Spirit*, till the Spirit is within; (Gal. v. 22) and "By their fruits ye shall know them." In all these cases it is merely the happy natural outflow of that which the Christian possesses; and is to the Glory of God. Hence, dear friend, I don't like the expression, "Unto the obtaining of Eternal life." We never find the *obtaining* of it a future thing in Scripture. To be sure the full unhindered enjoyment of it—"reigning in life;" and its full fruition is always, as we well know, a future thing; but its *possession* always a present thing to the believer. It may be clouded and hindered, but it is there. He has obtained it as he has obtained forgiveness of his sins, by faith in the death and blood-shedding of Christ.

*Life and Propitiation* come to us through the death of Christ (see 1 John iv. 9, 10).—When we hear His words and believe on the Father who sent Him, we have eternal life (see John v. 24; xvii. 3). We are born again by His word, applied to our consciences by the Holy Ghost. "Of His own will begat he us with the word" (James i. 18). "Being born again . . . by the word of God" (1 Peter i. 23). We have thus a life in our own souls which as sinners we never possessed, we were dead *in sins*; Christ came into the place of death *for sin*. In His death he put away sin, and bore the sins of many (Heb. ix. 26-28). God raised Him up from the dead, and has, by the same power, quickened, or given *life* to us, together with Christ thus risen, "having forgiven us all trespasses (read carefully Eph. i. 19-23, ii. 5, 6; and Col. ii. 13); leaving them behind us as it were, in the grave of Christ, and thus bring us into a new place in resurrection before Himself. And so Christ risen from the dead, and gone up to heaven, is our life, which is thus "Hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 1-4); and is—blessed be God—as secure as He! We have still the old nature (we had nothing else once) to treat as an enemy, to mortify, and subdue; but our life is secured for ever. Hence, dear friend, it is not a question with us now of

*obtaining life*; but of *possessing Christ, who is our life*; and thus safe in God's own hand. Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) The fruits will be seen somehow, wherever there is life in the soul; still the fruits are not to be an object to occupy us. Let *others* see them—and let *us* be occupied with Him, who is our life—risen, victorious over death, sin-bearing, judgment, everything: and its object and measure. If so occupied we will have but few doubts of the final issue—rather treating them as they deserve, as of the enemy. Faith, keeping the door of our hearts, will admit of no such intruders there.

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Q.—“An humble believer,” Glasgow; asks, What is the teaching of Proverbs i. 26? Does that passage mean that God will rejoice over the punishment of the wicked? Does “Wisdom” in the context, mean the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost? &c., &c.

A.—In the passage it is “Wisdom” who speaks crying in the streets to the simple, the scorner, and the fool, to turn at her reproof, and to love not their own ways; and that Wisdom’s spirit would be given them, and Wisdom’s words made known to them. (The fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, v. 7.) When they would therefore be reaping the fruits of the folly they had sown, under the retributive government of God in the world, in their fear and calamity they would call upon Wisdom to guide them, but they would not be heard—it would then be too late to learn Wisdom’s ways. Wisdom would then laugh at them as it were (it is a figure of speech), for what they were suffering; having set at nought, Wisdom’s counsels and reproof, when she cried to them to learn her ways.

The Book of Proverbs refers to the government of God here below on the principle that, “Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap” (Gal. vi. 7). This is true of saint or sinner. Grace saves the vilest, but the government of God is over all. It is on the principle that if a man squanders his money, or his time, or his health; he will reap the fruit of his ways in the loss of these things, &c. The grace of God in Salvation never sets aside these principles of His dealings with men; nor does this marvellous grace alter the fact that every man reaps the fruits of his ways under God’s government. A true Christian

may do something for want of discretion, and want of hearkening to Wisdom's words, which he may have to repent of all his days.

As to your question, who is it who speaks? It is plain from 1 Cor. i. 24. That Christ is the "Wisdom of God;" and that He is made unto us wisdom, v. 30. (Read Prov. viii. 22-35, and compare with John i. 1, 2) Christ's word, that is, the expression of Himself, is to dwell in us richly in all wisdom. The Christian, too, is exhorted to walk in wisdom toward them that are without—the world redeeming the time (Col. iii. 16; iv. 5).

It is plain that Prov. i. 20-23, is not a Gospel invitation at all. Hence the danger of using Scripture out of its true place and connection. The passage does not teach that God will laugh at the punishment of the wicked, and the rejector of Christ, as you have heard. The divinely taught mind shrinks from such an idea.

## THE THIEF ON THE CROSS.

LUKE XXIII. 32-46.

It has been said by some one, referring to this scene, "There is but *one* case of death-bed repentance in the Bible, that man may not despair; but there is *only one*, that man may not presume." But how much the savour of the self-righteous human heart betrays itself in these words. The latent self-righteousness of the human heart, which would like to add some little atom of its own wretched "*doings*," to the perfect work of Christ for the soul. And yet when we come to examine this wondrous scene, we find that *all must* be saved as was this thief! I speak not now of the period at which such a work is wrought in the soul, but of the fact that all must be saved just as he. And if this be the case, Why not, my reader, now? Why not believe, and know the joy and blessedness of an interest in the saving work of Christ, before another day is past, that your soul may be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost?

There is an absolute necessity for an entire and total change in the sinner, before he can even see the Kingdom of God. A man may be at the pinnacle of a religious reputation in the world; his name may grace the lists of benevolence—may be held up as a model for the imitation of others; and

yet never have undergone this mighty change. It is a sad and humiliating fact, that possess as he may, piety, or rather that which looks like it, before his fellows; and the deepest learning, an amiable nature, a benevolent mind, all these qualities, and many more besides; and yet he may never even have *seen* the Kingdom of God. This is a hard saying, who can bear it? Still, it is an absolute necessity that a man must be born again. He must be renewed from the very sources of his nature, thoughts, affections, feelings, heart, conscience, actions. He must be what the Lord Jesus told the man of the Pharisees—the teacher in Israel—the ruler of the Jews—Nicodemus; he “*must be born again.*” In this man’s case, the lesson was but slowly learned. He had much to surrender. It was painful for him to be told that his whole life was wrong; his efforts and energies, sincere, as doubtless they were, had sprung from a wrong basis; and that the whole man must be changed from the very roots, before he could enter into the Kingdom which God was setting up. Painful, it must have been, to think of what gave him weight and authority, and for which he was held in esteem by his fellows, only came under the sweeping sentence from the divine Searcher of hearts, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” (John iii. 3). Painful for him to learn, that, if he would enter God’s Kingdom, he must consent to do so as the vilest sinner, stript of all that would put him in advance of others, and give him a precedence there. And yet, this entire, complete, and total change, is absolutely necessary to enter into the Kingdom of God; necessary for the vilest, necessary for all. It levels all distinctions; puts men, in the light of its solemn truth, on an even ground before God, so that no flesh may glory in His presence. Have you, my reader, experienced or undergone this mighty change? Or do you occupy the same platform on which you were introduced amongst the sinners of this world? Important question! May the Lord enable you to answer it honestly in His presence!

The case of the thief is a remarkably beautiful illustration of this mighty work in a soul—this total change in the man. And besides this, we have in this scene, the mighty work of Christ for him, which enabled him to take his place *with Christ that very day* within the vail. The work which fits *all* who believe it to take their place, by faith, with Jesus, the *same* moment, in God’s presence, within the vail,

The case of the comrade thief, too, is truly and deeply solemn. A soul passing away from this world into another; approaching the portals of an eternity, from which there is no return, with a scoff on his lip, and the taunt for the Blessed One in his mouth, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." Deeply solemn is such a closing hour of a man's shadowy life here, Christless, faithless, sinning against his own soul. Well is it said of the wicked, "There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men." (Ps. lxxiii. 4, 5.)

Let us look at the same hour in the other's life—the brightest it had ever known. "But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Dost not thou fear God?'"—grand illustration of the work of God in a soul. It began with but a little word, but a word by which one reads a heart which had been taught in wisdom's ways. For "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. i. 7). We have in this little word a precious work of God in his soul. It is said of the wicked, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. iii. 18). God is not in all their thoughts. "Dost thou not fear God?" Here was the root of this mighty change in this man: the holy fear of God. God had His proper place in his thoughts, although he did not know Him yet as a Saviour. It was Abraham's word of the men of Gerar, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake." It was the fear of God which guarded Joseph's heart, when in the land of his exile—"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God." It is that which guards the heart in a world of sin. Its absence leaves room for the workings of man's corrupt and wicked will. It is the beginning of wisdom.

How is it with you, my reader? Can you say that this holy fear of God has been the guide and fashioner of all the thoughts and intents of your heart, the actions of your life, and the motives which have governed your ways? Have all these been governed by the fear of the Lord? Has God had His proper place in your heart; and has His fear restrained your will? Job was a man who "feared God, and eschewed evil;" Cornelius—one who "feared God, with all his house." "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a

book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name." (Mal. iii). It was the proof of Abraham's faith, "Now I know that thou fearest God." (Gen. xxii). Now this "fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (Prov. xiv. 27). It "tendeth unto life," (Prov. xix. 23); and we see this so remarkably in this man. It led him to take his true place before God. "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? *And we indeed justly.*" Can you with him say, "We indeed justly?" Can you, as he did, take the just and righteous sentence of death, to your own soul; and own, in full honesty of heart, the rightness of your sentence? "We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward for our deeds." Do you own the justness of the sentence; yea, have you passed it upon your own self, as the due reward for your sins? Blessed peace; to own in full, your true and proper condition before God, and thus take the sentence of death home to your own soul, as he! How the work of God grew brighter and brighter, till he was with Christ in Paradise! *God* had his true place in his soul, and *he* was in his true place before God! The rightness of his sentence pronounced by his own lips; no excusing of himself, as I dare say, you have often done; pleading circumstances—an evil nature, to palliate your sins. A convicted sinner was there making no excuses for his sins and his sentence, but owning that God was true. Justifying God, and condemning himself, as one of Wisdom's children. "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

So much for the work *in* this man's soul.

Now we must look at another thing—at the work *for* him—for all, on the cross beside him.

There hung beside him the Lord of Glory: and out of the mouth of Wisdom's child, as the light grew brighter in his soul, we have a testimony of two things—the *spotlessness* and the *Lordship* of Christ. "This man hath done nothing amiss." And the spotless Christ, and the self-condemned sinner, were side by side! Grand and solemn scene, the like of which eternity will never behold again! Beautiful testimony of that dying man, which led him to take his

place with Jesus there, at a moment, and amidst the turmoil of a scene such as that which surrounded the cross. A time when the world was united against a man who had "done nothing amiss." When even those who had loved Him and leaned upon Him during His life, deserted Him at the hour of His greatest sorrow. And yet the soul of that man was absorbed with Christ, who hung there. His whole soul's vision was filled with Jesus; and he forgot himself. A complete and total change had taken place in the man; and, forgetting his agony, all his thought was, "Lord remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." How would it be with you, my reader, if you were dying on your comfortable bed, surrounded with your sorrowing friends? Or how is it with you now? Would Christ be so precious to your soul then? Is He so precious to you now, as to absorb all your thoughts, and fill your soul with Himself? The terrible suffering of that moment had no power to disengage his heart from Christ. And his only request was, "Lord, remember me!"

But what was the reply? The light in his soul ended otherwise than he thought. Instead of being remembered when Jesus returned in His kingdom, he got a place *that very day* in Paradise with Christ! The work was done by Jesus there which enabled this man to have a place with Him that very same day; even as it fits every soul who believes in it, to take his place that moment with Jesus within the vail!

Dear reader, have you gazed with a believing, adoring heart upon that work of Christ, as that which has delivered you from the wrath to come? And believing, have you *taken* your place, in virtue of it, within the vail? Where are you, if you have not done so? What are you? Outside the vail, an unbeliever, still in your sins! Solemn place, solemn condition. Rest not a moment, then. The same blow which rent the vail, exposed the wickedness of *man's* heart, in the death of Christ; and revealed the love of *God's* heart, in sparing not His Son; and has put away for ever the sins of His believing people. Rest not a moment, then, till you take your place, by faith, inside the vail. Let no false reasoning of the enemy, or unbelief of your own heart, deprive you of this joy. Happy, indeed, if you have, as the saved thief, the fear of God in your heart: happier still, if you have owned your true state and condition before God



—taken the sentence of death home to your own soul ; and happiest, if you have forgotten yourself altogether as he, and that your soul's vision is absorbed with Him who was there consummating His love in doing a work which gives you a cloudless title to take your place this moment within the vail with Jesus ! This day . . . with me, in Paradise !

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*Holiness*—Separation from evil.

*Innocence*—Ignorance of it.

Adam was created in innocence, and fell ; thus obtaining the knowledge of good and evil ; as we read, “the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” (Gen. iii. 22). To the state in which he was created we never can return. We never can *unlearn* the knowledge of good and evil. The “new man” (the Christian), is “after God created in righteousness, and true holiness.” (Eph. iv. 24).

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## J E R E M I A H .

ALL was *reality* with Jeremiah. The present corruption was a reality to him, for he rebuked it, and mourned over it. The approaching judgment was a reality to him, for he wept at the thought of it, and deprecated it. The final glory was a reality to him, for he laid out his money upon it. He had occasional refreshings of spirit from the glory. His sleep and the dreams that accompanied it, in ch. xxxi., was “sweet unto him.” It was a kind of moment in the “Holy Mount” to him—a transfiguration in spirit—for a light for the kingdom visited his soul there. He had revelations, too, of the “Lord our Righteousness,” and could speak and write of Him. But not only as thus occasionally refreshed in spirit, and thus gifted to write and speak : but he was a suffering witness against “this present world ;” and he laid out his money on “the world to come ;” and it was this that completed his character, which would have been poor and wanting without it. For we may *speak* of Christ, and teach about the kingdom, but to witness for Him against a rejecting world, and to be “rich toward God,” in the hope of His kingdom ; this is to fill out and realize our character as saints.

We may covet these elements of character, some of us, for

we are but half Jeremiahs. We can *talk* of Christ, but can we suffer for Him? We may *teach* about the *kingdom*, but can we lay out our money upon it?

The parable of the potter in Jer. xviii., was designed to let Israel know that though brought into covenant, they were still within the range of the Lord's judgments and visitations. And accordingly in chapter xix., the judgment is typically executed. In John Baptist's time, Israel is found in the same state of self-confidence. They said in that spirit, "We have Abraham to our father." And so, under the Lord's ministry, it is still the same—they still boast in the fatherhood of Abraham and of God (John viii.). But these boasts were vain, as John and the Lord will tell them. That is, John and the Lord teach them again the lesson of Jer. xviii., that they were not, though in covenant bonds, beyond the reach of judgment.

Now, the object of the enemy in Matt. iv., was to get the Lord into the same condition with Israel, *i.e.*, to inspire Him with confidence, in the spirit of disobedience. He partially quoted Ps. xci., citing the *promised security*, but omitting the *required conditional* obedience. We know how fully He triumphed over the enemy, citing Deut. vi., where obedience is Israel's declared ground of security.

Thus the Lord in this feature of character, as in all besides, was the moral contradiction of man or of Israel.

But all this has a lesson for us at this day. Christendom or Babylon has now taken the place of Israel of old. Babylon trusts in security in spite of her moral condition. She says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." (Rev. xviii. 7). But Rev. xviii. is another action, like that of the prophet in the Potter's house, or in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, teaching the unfaithful steward that the doom of the shattered vessel awaits him.

God never sanctions disobedience. He did not go into the garden of Eden to accredit Adam's sin, but to bring relief in the way of grace for it. So in the mystery of the Gospel, He utterly condemns sin, while delivering the sinner; 1 Sam. iv. witnesses this—that God will never sanction disobedience, nor does He commit Himself to His stewards. He does commit Himself to His own gifts and calling (Rom. xi.), but never to His stewards; they are still answerable to Him, and disobedience works forfeiture, and Christ is the only Steward that ever kept covenant, that ever *stood* in the

*conditional* place. Matt. iv. shows that He kept his blessings under Ps. xci.—and His Israel blessings under Deut. vi.; but all others, in their several turns, have failed, and Babylon's boast is a lie.

We live at a moment when Babylon or Christendom is filling itself afresh with this boast, just previous to her overthrow, when she is to meet the doom of the potter's vessel or of the millstone.

For this boast is defiance. It is not faith in God, but real disavowal of His claims. It is the denial of her subjection to Him, of her being in the place of the steward's wife, answerable to Him and his judgment. It is the very characteristic that completes her identification with that Babylon which says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow," and it leaves her ready for the judgment, as the potter's vessel in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; so of the millstone in the hand of the Angel in Rev. xviii.

## PSALMS II. AND VIII.

THE difference between Psalms ii. and viii., and the names of Christ in each, helps to the opening up of the word in a most remarkable way.

In Psalm ii. the Lord Jesus is presented as God's 'King - in Zion—the Lord's anointed (or Christ). He is presented as God's King in Zion to His people; to the Gentiles, but is rejected. All classes uniting to reject Him—heathen raging—people of Israel—kings and rulers. Jehovah is represented in a figure as laughing at their impotent rage; and the 6th verse tells us, that although his purposes, as far as man could do, were frustrated for a time, they were not set aside—God would yet set His king upon His holy hill of Zion. The Lord presented Himself in His character as Messiah or Christ to His people, and announced the principles of His Kingdom; but His people did not receive Him. In Acts iv. 25, &c., we find this 2nd Psalm quoted as far as the 2nd verse; and the Holy Ghost shows its fulfilment by Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, in the rejection of God's Anointed King, His Christ. His Kingdom, consequently, was set aside for the time. This we know was in full measure at the cross, just where His people rejected their Messiah, and said, "We have no king

but Cæsar" (Jno xix. 15). "Then," at that solemn word, Pilate delivered Him up to their will; but while it came out in full measure at the Cross, the spirit that proved itself there, showed itself during His life and ministry. In Luke viii. we find the Lord going out "Preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God." In Luke ix. He sends out the Twelve with the same testimony, and gave them authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. Two remarkable characters of the state of things in the millennial day, when Satan will be bound and restrained in the bottomless pit (Rev. xx. 1-3), and man cured of his diseases, and the world filled with blessing. These miracles are termed in Heb. vi., "The powers of the world to come." They were samples exhibited by the Lord and the Twelve of that which will be to the full in the Kingdom. When they return, the Lord asks them what the result of all this testimony, from His own lips as from theirs had been? Their reply shows that the response the testimony met was the idle speculations of men's minds as to whom He was: some said one thing—some another; but few cared for God's Kingdom, or God's King. (See Luke ix. 18, 19). The Lord then appeals to the little band of disciples, whom He had gathered around Him, as to whom He was. Peter answering for the rest, replies, "*the Christ of God*." Jesus straitly charged them to tell no man *that thing*. The time was past—His claims had been put forth as "The Christ." "The Lord's Anointed," and had been refused—the Kingdom had been announced in grace, and rejected—there was no use in any further testimony. The Lord then immediately adds, "*The Son of Man* must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain and *be raised the third day*;" the latter statement, which the Lord always adds when he tells them of the "Son of Man" being about to suffer, and be rejected. The title of Psalm viii., which He fully takes in resurrection, having been previously rejected as "The Christ," according to Psalm ii. And, accordingly, instead of the glories and blessings of the Kingdom, it entails a path of suffering and rejection on His people. (See verses 23-26.)

Now in Psalm viii. 4-8, we find that there is a "Son of Man" to whom dominion is given over all creation—the dominion which Adam had received in Gen. i. 26, and which he had sinned away and lost. When we turn to Heb. ii.,

we find ~~the~~ Psalm quoted, and applied to Christ Himself; and ~~the~~ Apostle explains, "We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower ~~than~~ the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour," having first tasted death for the inheritance. It was His by right of creation; but he takes it with its load of sin upon it, and inherits it as Redeemer-Heir. We see Him not yet in possession of it; but He is meanwhile crowned with glory and honour, waiting for the headship of all things.

Why, then, does He not take possession? Why the delay? We find that God is occupied with something else, while Jesus thus waits. If we turn to Ephes. i. 22, we find the 8th Psalm quoted again. Christ is looked at as the glorified Man, whom God had raised up, He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places—verse 20; and that while he is waiting there, God is quickening, raising up, and seating in the heavenlies in Jesus, the joint-heirs, by the same power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. (See ch. ii. 5, 6,). Christ has laid the foundation of this glorious work in His Cross. Having made peace by His blood—broken down the middle wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile, making out of twain one new man—reconciling both in one body by the Cross, having by it slain the enmity which had heretofore existed—and through Himself giving access to both by one Spirit to the Father—v. 18. The Holy Ghost becomes the bond of union and power of access for the members of Church—Christ's body—through Jesus to the Father. Unit~~ing~~ all believers into one body, and to their head exalted as man by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven where Jesus was glorified.

*(To be continued, Lord willing.)*

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## SALVATION.

"Good morning, Mr. ———. I understand you say that when a man believes the Gospel he is saved. Is this so?"  
 "Yes, it is quite true; but I only repeat what Scripture so plainly says at Eph. ii. 5-8, 'By grace are ye saved.' I believe that a sinner is saved, and effectually saved, when he

believes the Gospel." "And how is it, then, Mr ———, that I am told to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling, I am quite sure that is Scripture, too; so that it does not appear to be so sure, after all." "Yes, my friend, it is Scripture, sure enough; but, perhaps, you are not aware that there are two ways in which salvation is spoken of in the Scriptures—the salvation of the sinner, and the salvation of the saint." "Oh, is it so, I never heard that before; tell me how it is, and give me Scripture for your view, because otherwise it may be only your view after all." "Certainly, it would: but I will do so as far as I am able. The passage you have quoted as to working out your own salvation, is in Phil. ii. 12, and refers to the salvation of the saint, from the circumstances, that is the difficulties, trials, temptations, and sufferings of the wilderness journey, after his redemption; he is not told to work out his own righteousness, or his own forgiveness, or his own redemption. Paul is exhorting those who were redeemed, and who possessed righteousness and forgiveness to work out their own salvation, or deliverance from all the difficulties of their pathway, with fear and trembling, not for the result, but because God Himself was working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure. (Ch. ii. 12, 13.) Paul was now a prisoner in Rome (ch. i. 13, 14; ch. ii. 12), and unable to help them against the enemy as he had while with them, and they were suffering much reproach and affliction." (Ch. ii. 27-29.)

"Dear me, why, of course, a believer wants to be helped in all these things, and I am sure he needs to be preserved from the enemy, too; but is this the sort of salvation which is here?" "It is; and in many other places of Scripture, too, such as in Rom. xiii. 11, where Paul writes, 'Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.'" "Oh, I see, they were believers whose salvation was nearer, and as you say, a believer is one who is saved." "Of course he is saved or redeemed; 'By grace ye are saved,' and the Apostle in this passage tells them that the night is far spent, and that the day is at hand; and exhorts them to cast away the works of darkness, and put upon them the armour of light, because their salvation, that is their *final* deliverance, was now nearer than when they had believed."

"Yes, I begin to see that the salvation of the sinner is what he receives in believing, and that of the believer what he needs through the wilderness journey from every difficulty

and, finally, out of the wilderness altogether." "Quite so, just as God redeemed Israel out of Egypt, and afterwards delivered them out of the wilderness—and so of the sinner. It is 'by grace he is saved' (Eph. ii. 5); and yet he wears 'for an helmet the hope of salvation' (1 Thess. v. 8), that is, his final deliverance from wilderness circumstances, and entrance into glory."

"I am glad I met you. I am sure that word, 'work out your own salvation,' has puzzled many as well as it has myself. How many wiles the enemy practises, to be sure, from which we need deliverance, and this is one of them; using portions of Scripture for persons in one state, which are only intended for people in quite another. Good day."

## PEACE OFFERINGS—BURNT OFFERINGS.

HEBREWS xiii. 10-15.

At the close of St. Luke, the Lord takes the disciples forth from Jerusalem, and walks on with them till He reaches Bethany, the place which had already witnessed resurrection. (John xi.) There He ended His walk, and having lifted up His hands and blessed them, He was parted from them and taken up into heaven.

There is a moral beauty in the ascension taking place at the spot which had already (as has been observed by others) witnessed resurrection. The blessing, too, at the moment of the parting, is full of meaning. It tells us that it is blessing which now remains to us as the fruit of his death and resurrection; and it tells us also, that to bless us still, is His care and business in the heavens to which He has now ascended.

But there is more. After the Lord had left them, as we further see in Luke xxiv., the disciples return from Bethany to Jerusalem, but it is to find it a kind of *New Jerusalem*. They do not require it as a city of solemnities and ordinances, and legal appointments; but to us it is as a temple of praise, and fill it with sacrifices of joy and thanksgiving. "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God." This is very beautiful, and this ought to give us our character as a people who are ever living in the fresh joy and liberty which the

**Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus inspire.** We ought to be saints of that order, worshippers who have been at Bethany with a risen Jesus, and there seen His ascension as the purger of our sins, up to the highest place in heaven, and this will be confirmed to us when we read other New Testament Scriptures.

When we go from the closing verses of Luke to the Epistle of the Hebrews, we find there that the Holy Ghost is leading us to a sanctuary of praise, a temple of peace offerings and burnt offerings, which the accomplished and accepted work of Christ has erected for us in the present dispensation. And I would trace this for a little moment or two.

We learn from Heb. xiii. 10, that we have an altar whereof we are to eat. Now it is simple and natural to read this as insinuating a *peace-offering*; because that was the only offering of which the offerer himself partook. (See Lev. i-vii.) But this again intimates that the sin-offering had already been accepted, because the worshipper with a *peace-offering* must be clean. (See Lev. vii. 20). It was the expression of communion, and in that place, and in that relationship to God. He must be clean, fit for the divine presence, by the justification and acceptance of his person, through a sacrifice for sin already accomplished.

This being the intimation of ch. xiii. 10 in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is deeply interesting to go back to the earlier parts of it, and discover that a feast upon, or after a sacrifice, has been spread out before us there, and we are called to sit and eat of it. I mean this in the whole argument of the Epistle, from ch. i. to ch. x. the glories of the Lord Jesus now in heaven, after the sacrifice of Himself here for our sins, are shown us; and as they pass before us one after another, we are exhorted to enjoy the sight of them. This is surely the spreading a table for us, or the setting of us at a feast upon a sacrifice; or, as I may express it, a calling of us to the altar in God's house with a peace offering. And now, according to all this, we are told at the end of ch. xiii. 10, that we *have* this feast, that we *are* at this altar, and we are warned not to leave it for any service inconsistent with it. This is the conclusion drawn from the previous teaching, and all this gives a beautiful character to the whole Epistle.

In connection with this, or rather in company and furtherance of it, I would look at the earlier part of the Epistle,



in the **light** of which I have now referred to it, as showing us a **feast** upon a sacrifice.

Ch. i.—In this ch. the Lord is declared to be seated in the **high** heavens, in personal and official excellency above angels, **as** the result of His having here on earth purged our sins; **and** we are exhorted to *listen* to Him while speaking to us from that place, and in that character. Will it not, I ask, be meat and drink to our souls if we do so? Shall we not be sitting at the feast upon a sacrifice?

Ch. ii.—Here He is shown to us as crowned with glory and honour waiting for the Headship, and all this because He has already gone through humiliation and suffering for us, and we are told that “we see” Him there. May I not again ask is not this a feast upon a sacrifice? What less is the sight of such a one in such a place and condition. We see the One who died for us glorified. Yea, *because* He died for us!

Ch. v.-vii.—In these chapters the same Lord Jesus is presented to us as the High Priest of our profession, so constituted on the ground of His wrought-out salvation for us, on the fact that He made Himself the author of such salvation by His sufferings, perfected by death. And we are told to *use* Him in this character, for He is just the One we need. Surely this is but another part of the same altar feast, at which the saints of God in this gospel day by grace are seated.

Ch. viii.—Here again His glory, though in another form of it appears before us. But still as the One who has accomplished the remission of sins. He is declared to be now in the heavens, the Mediator of the New Covenant which speaks of grace, and of His doings for us, and of nothing else; and we are taught to know that it is in *this Covenant we are interested*,\* and we are counselled no more to deal with the old Covenant, under which, indeed, we are condemned. Again, I say, this is of the same character. If we do as we are here taught to do, our souls will still be feeding upon a sacrifice.

Ch. ix., x.—Here in these chapters, closing as they do the

\* Note.—As Christians, we are so far interested in the new Covenant, as to be partakers of its *privileges*. But we must remember that it is *only* established with Judah and Israel, never with the Christian. The blood of the new Covenant has been shed, by which we enjoy its *privileges*; forgiveness of sins, &c.—ED.

doctrinal part of this wondrous Epistle, we learn that the altar of sin offering has been for ever satisfied, that the one offering of Himself by the Christ of God has answered all its demands; it will never look for another victim. The Lamb is in glory upon the accomplishment of atonement, and we are sanctified and perfected for ever. And the word of command to us is this, to be true to this great fact, and with *boldness to enter into the holiest*—the divine presence, on the title of it.

This is truly the crowning and finishing of all this story of mysterious grace. This is not only spreading the feast for us, but setting us in perfect ease at the feast; telling us to be of good courage and of animated hearts because of thoroughly relieved consciences, in the full brightness of the divine presence. Thus we may surely say, we have reached the altar of the present temple of God, as an altar of peace offerings. We have communion with God in full peace of soul, because of reconciliation through the offering of Him who was made sin for us.

But we are also ministering at the altar of *burnt* offering, as after the day of atonement. To exhibit this, we may again look at the Epistle to the Hebrews, as we have already traced it. I may now call to mind that in every light in which the Lord Jesus is seen in the course of that divine writing, He appears as the One who has put away sin. Every sight that we get of Him there, is as the Ascended One, crowned with glory and honour. He is seen in excellency above angels in expectation of His enemies being made His footstool. And then in the prospect of the Lordship of all things, as the victorious Deliverer of sinners from the fear of death, as Mediator of the new Covenant, as one who has been welcomed to the highest seat of heaven, as the Doer of God's will here on earth, in behalf of us sinners. As the Great High Priest of the sanctuary which God Himself has built in the heavens. All this constitutes a coronation with glory and honour. "Many crowns are on His head," as we sometimes sing together. But each of them tells us that it is because He has made atonement, and put away sin for ever.

This is so as we have before largely seen. The Lord Jesus is not now girded with the simple white linen garments, the symbols of holiness and humiliation, to go through atoning after the pattern of Aaron at the *beginning* of the mystic 10th day of the 7th month. (Lev. xv. 4.) But in

Priestly robes of glory and beauty, after the pattern of Aaron at the end of that wondrous day, celebrating as in Heaven the accomplishment of reconciliation. (Lev. xvi. 23, 24.) We see Him as *after* the day of atonement, and not as going through it. And on this depends the different services of the two ages; the *Legal* or *Mosaic* and *Evangelic*. In the *former*, atonement was foreshadowed; in the *latter* it is celebrated. Sin was present *then*. Had in remembrance afresh every year. *Now*, it is put out of sight, and gone for ever. Services in the temple were then typical of atonement; now, they are commemorative of it. The only thing which now remains to be done of all the earthly services of the 10th day of the 7th month, as we read them in Lev. xvi., is the offering of the burnt-offering, which was done at the end of that day. Because the blood of the true sacrifice for sin has been accepted in heaven. In Levitical language it has been sprinkled on the mercy-seat in the Holiest; it has been applied by faith to the conscience of the sinner; the resurrection, too, like the dismissal of the scape-goat, has published the putting away of sin for ever. Yea, moreover, the body of the victim has been burned without the camp—Jesus is rejected by the world—and thus nothing remains but the offering of the *burnt-offering*; the rendering to God, the God of salvation, an act of worship and thanksgiving, on the ground of perfected atonement. Therefore, we read, in this same Epistle, and in the same place of it, this fine allusion to the day of atonement and to the offering of burnt-offering which closed it. “For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burnt without the camp; wherefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate; let us go forth, therefore, unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By Him let us, therefore, offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks, to His name.” (Ch. xiii. 11-15.) Thus in v. 15, this Epistle sets us at the altar with a *burnt-offering*, at the end of the day of atonement; as in v. 10, the same chapter, had set us at the altar with a *peace-offering*. And we are commanded, or invited, to offer the sacrifice of praise continually, and to give thanks to His name. And this is the temple-service which we saw the

disciples rendering in Luke xxiv., after they had returned from Bethany to Jerusalem.

What rich present fruit to the soul from the work of Christ, or from the cross and resurrection! Being *near Him* with a *peace-offering*, in the enjoyment of communion. Being *before Him* with a *burnt-offering*, in the character of a worshipper!

Surely the sequel is easily weighed. The Epistle to the Hebrews erects an altar, not to receive a *sin* offering; but where the believer may appear with his *peace-offering* as in communion; and with his *burnt-offering* as a worshipper!

J. G. B.

### "THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT."

It is a precious thought to the anxious soul, that the weakest touch of faith, the touch of the very hem of the garment of Christ—the feeblest apprehension of His work—brings instant and perfect salvation to the soul. It is *not* how much one has realized of Christ, or His work; but the fact that the soul has, as it were, touched Him by faith, that renders it most blessedly secure in His hand. One hears the expression, "O! if I had the faith of such a one, I could then know I was saved." What a mistake to think that it is the amount of *my* faith which saves me instead of the fact that it is *Christ*, in whom I have faith, who does this. I would press this upon any poor anxious soul, hitherto, perhaps, searching its own poor heart, to find strong faith in order to make that a resting place. The soul will, doubtless, grow in the knowledge of Christ, and His work and all its glories—will grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus, when occupied in heart with him. All this may confirm its faith, and make it stronger and stronger; but the feeble touch of faith it is which brings instant and perfect salvation. There is a living link wrought between the soul and Christ, which nothing can snap—a link commenced in time, but made for eternity!

This is illustrated in various ways in the Word of God. Take the case of the two disciples of John Baptist (John i. 35-41), to whom John had pointed out the "Lamb of God." They did not realise, at the moment, Jesus by that glorious title, the "*Lamb of God*," but they apprehended Him in

the humblest of all His glorious titles—the most earthly; and they say, "We have found the *Messias!*" and, consequently, they possessed *all* that he was. Again, the woman of Samaria, in John iv. She was unable to grasp at the glories of the person of Jesus, the Son of the Father, who had come from heaven, to reveal the Father in grace to the world, and to give the Holy Ghost. But she had heard of a Messiah who, when he was come, would tell her all things; and the Lord in his grace meets her in the lowest place, where she could apprehend him, and said, "I that speak unto thee, am he!" It is a blessed thought for the poor anxious soul, that it is not *how much* I know, that saves me; but *the Christ* whom I know, who does so.

I heard of late a striking illustration of this truth, which may be a blessing to the heart of some dear, anxious soul. As far as I can remember the story, it was as follows:—A brother in the Lord, who, with the spirit of an evangelist, wished to let others know of the Christ whom he had learned for his own soul, was requested to call and see an aged woman at R——, who was ill. He had been enjoying some time previously, the beauties of the Shepherd's seeking love for the lost sheep, and Father's reception of the returning prodigal, and other of the varied beauties of that well-known chapter, Luke xv. He naturally thought that she would have enjoyed them as much as he had himself; and, with such a thought, he read the chapter over and over, and rehearsed to himself the beauties in it which he had so enjoyed; and then went to pay his visit to the woman. On arriving, he produced his Bible, and read the chapter, expounding, as he went on, each part. He stopped for a moment, when he had not got far, and asked the old woman, "Is not that beautiful?" She replied, "O yes, it's beautiful; and sure He says, 'Come to me all that are sick, and sore, and sorry, and sad, and I'll give you rest.'" My friend then went on with his chapter, and after a little more explanations, he again asked, "Is not that beautiful?" Again the old woman replied in the same words, "O yes, it's beautiful; and sure He says, 'Come to me all that are sick, and sore, and sorry, and sad, and I'll give you rest.'" This startled my friend, and he could not make out what she meant, by using the same words twice; still he went on, and when he stopped, to his astonishment, the old woman said *exactly the same words!* All of a sudden the truth struck him.

The old woman had not apprehended his expositions of the chapter in any wise; but she had some time or other heard those precious words of the Saviour, in Matt. xi. 28, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Those words had quickened her soul to life; His voice had pierced her inmost heart. A living link was wrought in time between her soul and Christ—a link which was formed for eternity. The words were life to her soul. She could just apprehend that one little truth, that *He* had invited her thus. She knew *Him* but in that one little word; apprehended no more of Jesus than this; and yet her soul was saved. It was Christ she knew. Her knowledge of *Him* was confined to this; and the Christ she knew was her Saviour.

Is there a link—a feeble one it may be, dear reader—between your soul and Jesus? Has your poor weak faith but "*touched* the hem of His garment," as it were? If so, remember this,—it is not the extent of your apprehension of *Him*; but it is that Christ, whom you have but touched, who is *your Saviour*, and who has earned that title by His own blood; and *you are saved*!

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### "THE MORNING STAR."

It has been truly said by some one, that the Old Testament Scriptures end with the hope of the coming of the "Sun of Righteousness;" and the New with that of the "Morning Star." Sweetly beautiful is this. The godly remnant of Israel who feared the Lord, and spake often one to another, (Mal. iii.), had that precious consolation before them—that of the coming of the "Sun of Righteousness," with healing in his wings (Mal. iv.) And we find them in Luke ii., the Simeons, and Annas, and "all them that looked for redemption in Israel," (ver. 25-38), rejoicing in the advent of the "Sun of Righteousness," the "consolation of Israel." But, alas, His beams fell coldly on the hearts of His nation; they had no heart for Him. Men were morally unfit to have God amongst them; and so He was obliged to hide His beams of blessing in the darkened scene that surrounded His cross, and to reserve the day of blessing till another season. Meanwhile *our* calling was revealed, and *our* hope presented to us; not as the "Sun of Righteousness," but as the "Morning Star."

The more we contemplate the fitness of this symbol of our hope, the more does its divine origin appear. It is the watchman during the long night, who sees the morning star for a few moments, while the darkness is rolling itself away from off the face of the earth, and before the beams of the sun enliven the earth with their rays. And so with the Christian's hope; he watches during the moral darkness of the world, till the dawn; and just as the darkness is deepest, and is about to roll itself away before the beams of the "Sun of Righteousness," his hope is rewarded in seeing the "Morning Star," (Rev. xxii. 16), in His earliest brightness, coming to take up His people to Himself, that they may shine forth with Him, as the sun in the kingdom of their Father in the heavenlies; (Matt. xiii. 43.) when He reveals Himself to the Millennial earth, as the "Sun of Righteousness."

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"I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify these things in the churches; I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and the Morning Star. . . . He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus." . . . Amen.—(*Ways of God: Bible Treasury*).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life and shall *not* come into condemnation; but *is* passed from death unto life." Jno. v. 24.

"Verily, verily," Jesus, Lord,  
Were Thine own words when here;  
The soul that hearkens to Thy word  
Need never doubt nor fear.

All who believe in simple faith,  
From God that Thou wert sent,  
"Life everlasting," surely "hath,"  
For which Thine own was spent.

To condemnation ne'er shall come,  
For Thou hast borne it all;  
The perfect work that Thou hast done,  
Can never change or fall.

Passed they are from death to life,  
Before the throne of God;  
And all that can against them rise,  
Atoned for by Thy blood.

Then make each seeking anxious heart  
Bow low before Thy word:  
And by Thy Holy Spirit taught,  
Own Thee as Saviour, Lord!

G. S. P.

## THE LEPER.

LEV. xiv., 1-7.

THE disease of leprosy is a marked and impressive type of sin in the flesh. Of all diseases, it is the most loathsome; and is utterly incurable by man's art or device. The leper, too, was perfectly helpless in himself to remove his disease. He was in so sad a condition, that contact with him only partook of his defilement. Whosoever touched him, or whatsoever he touched, partook of his uncleanness. His unhappy state is described in Lev. xiii. 44-46, "He is a leprous man; he is unclean; the priest shall pronounce him *utterly* unclean; his plague is in his head. And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." Nothing can be more sad and pitiable than the state of the poor leper.

Reader, does it not fitly typify your case, if you are a sinner, unreconciled to God? Divest yourself of the garb of "profession" for a moment, and look upon your sad condition in God's sight. Behold in yourself a sinner from your heart's core, helpless to do anything for your cleansing; and in such a state that you can only pronounce those words of the leper of old, "Unclean, unclean."

In the Scripture before us, we find a precious figure of the work of the Saviour Jesus for the poor unclean sinner. We read, "And the priest shall *go forth* out of the camp," (ver. 3.) How our poor legal hearts reverse this order. Our thought is that the sinner must first come to God; and if he does his best, God will meet him and help him to do the remainder; all the while forgetting that all this "doing" on the sinner's part for salvation, is but the servile toil of a sinner; and that he is *not yet in the position* to be a "doer," but is still a sinner who needs to be cleansed from his sins, ere he can "do" any thing aright. No, the leper was outside the camp—the sinner is unreconciled to God. He is not yet in the place for the exercise of these "doings," all good and right in their place. The question for the sinner is not, What he is to occupy himself with outside of God's presence? but, How is he to get in? His proper occupation outside is to confess his true state as "unclean." Now,



God's most blessed answer to this is revealed here, "The priest shall go forth out of the camp." Hearken, dear sinner, to this precious revelation of God's grace, in sending His Son to seek and to save that which was lost—"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, *not* that we loved God, but that *He loved us*, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John, iv. 9, 10). Wondrous love of God! wondrous journey of His Son, from the bosom of the Father to a sin-stained world! Nothing was here to draw forth His love but need; and with all this, He came to the place where the sinner was!

We read in verse 4, etc., "Then shall the priest command to take from him that is to be cleansed, two birds alive, and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet and hyssop; and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water; and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field." This is very precious. The little clean birds tell us of the cleanness and spotlessness of God's spotless Lamb—The death of one of them, of Christ's offering Himself through the eternal Spirit, without spot to God, (Heb. ix. 14): and the other soaring aloft into the heavens, of Jesus risen from the dead, bearing the tokens of his blood-shedding up into the heavenly sanctuary—entering into the Holiest by His own blood. (Heb. ix. 12). All this was done by Him who acted for God, in the poor leper's view. What had he been doing all the while? He had been "standing still, to see the salvation of God;" gazing in silence at all this wonderful ceremony being performed for him; further than this he could not do. Till the work was complete, and his person sprinkled with the blood, and his eye had followed the little bird as it ascended towards the heavens, bearing on its wings the blood that had been shed and sprinkled upon him, he had but to stand still and behold! But what a tale it told his poor heart, as he saw the vanishing form of the little live bird! A tale of joy and peace—of days of solitude and

banishment from the camp being over—of communion with the Lord's people within about to begin. How his heart must have rejoiced to hear the priest who spake for God declare that he was *clean, through the seven-fold sprinkled blood!*

My reader, Are you one of the moral lepers—the sinners of the world who wants to be cleansed ; one who is conscious that your sins shut you out from the presence of God ? Look then, I beseech you, on the spotless substitute whom God has provided, working out on His cross, that which cleanses your soul before God. Remember that He who did this work for you, has risen again—has passed from the earth, where he suffered “outside the camp” into the presence of the living God, bearing in His body the marks of His perfect work, which cleanses your soul, and gives you a title to be there *with Him*; and that He who has thus wrought for you has Himself, as speaking for God “pronounced you clean,” with a cleanness which befits the presence of God ! The leper of old had but to behold the work for him, to hear his sentence pronounced, to believe it, and at once to enter upon all his blessedness. What more is demanded of you ? Just to “stand still, and behold the salvation of the Lord.” It is “to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth on Him*, that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Rom. iv. 5). Such, then, is somewhat of what we learn here. The leper *was sought* outside the camp—the work *was done by him who acted for God*. The blood was sprinkled *by him* on the leper. He who spake for God pronounced upon the value and efficacy of the work ; and there stood the cleansed man at the conclusion of the ceremony, “clean every whit,” and fit for the camp of God ! He had not raised a finger in the work ; he was not called upon to “feel,” or “hope,” or “realise,” or any of those things which often stumble the poor anxious soul, before he believed. These were all quite right in their place, but he had to do none of these things. And the sinner who gazes upon the cross of Christ has to do none of these things before he believes. What he wants is cleansing—a cleansing in the sight of God—such a cleansing as is worthy of Him ; and his satisfaction of heart surely would depend upon the satisfaction of God to the work which had cleansed his soul. God himself sent His Son to seek you, dear sinner ; God Himself provided a sacrifice to put away your sins. His own word has

pronounced upon its efficacy and your consequent cleanness; and surely your heart may rest in the satisfaction of God in this, and never raise a question, when God has pronounced you clean!

May the Lord bless this little word to your soul, my reader. If He guides to it, we may make another visit to this chapter, where we find the cleansed man becoming an active worker himself, finding out the responsibilities and duties of his new place, *within* the camp of God, and learning to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus."

"Clean every whit," thou saidst it, Lord;  
 Shall one suspicion lurk?  
 Thine, surely, is a faithful word,  
 And thine a finished work."

## MEDITATIONS—"MARAH."

### EXODUS XV.

SCARCELY had died away the rapturous notes of Israel's joy and exultation, because of their deliverance from all the power and malice of Egypt, before they are made to feel the barrenness and dearth of the wilderness. With what high and elated thoughts of God's goodness and power did they step out into the wilderness! Surely they were little prepared for this, their first march in it! To go three days, and find no water, and when they reached some, to find it "bitter!" What a contrast to the high tone and brilliant expectations they had but just celebrated in song! How differently had they expected of God! How natural it was for them, as knowing and rejoicing in the great work of deliverance which He had accomplished for them, to reckon on His providing a scene of unbroken happiness for them. Thus is it often with believers now, after having in like manner, as it were, crossed the Red Sea. They have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. They have the exulting experience of Rom. v. 3. But can they say, "*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.*" Do they as a rule, even *expect* tribulation here, much less *glory* in it? They are in all the exuberance of delight, because of peace with God, and hope of the glory of God. But what of this world—this wilderness? Have not many of us expected, and

even toiled to find all easy and agreeable here? Have we not sought to make ourselves happy here? Have we not been disappointed, depressed, almost inconsolable, when we have found no water here, and of what there is, only bitter? We have entered the wilderness, without understanding what it is. We have expected that the God who had blessed our souls with such peace and exultation over the enemy, and over death, should preserve and screen us from sorrow. In the spirit of our minds, we have not been one whit better than Israel. We have murmured and complained, toiled and fretted, to find easy and agreeable circumstances here. *But it cannot be.* The wilderness illustrates what the world is to the saint; and the first stage of the journey gives a character of the whole. It is all drought. There was nothing in it for Christ. He has been rejected out of it. There is nothing in it for God, or for His people. The world has condemned itself in its inability to value Christ. If the best cannot be valued, how could anything inferior? If the world has nothing for God in it: if it has rejected the best thing God could send into it, how can I expect Him to make it easy and agreeable to me? On the contrary, if true to Him, and estimating the world as He does, I glory in tribulation; for tribulation worketh endurance; endurance, experience (or trying); and trying hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which He hath given us. I ought to start in the wilderness expecting nothing but dearth; and in not doing so, is where many of us have failed. Our expectations have been like Israel; and our disappointment and disheartenment at not finding them realized, like theirs also. We have had, in fact, to go back, and begin anew—to start aright. Most of our failings in the wilderness march are attributed to our having started with a wrong idea of what the wilderness is. Ease or rest we *cannot* find in it; and the more we expect it, the more shall we chafe under the disappointment. The first stage in our journey must proclaim to us, as to Israel, what the true nature of the journey is. *It is Marah.*

What, then, is to be done—the water is bitter? *God* can make it sweet. He shows Moses a tree which, when cast into the water, makes it sweet. This is Christ crucified. This is what the world rejected; and the only good thing which God has to give His people in passing through it.

Nay more; the bitterness of the circumstances which I am passing through, is only an opportunity for Christ to come in, and so make the bitter sweet. If you have no Marah here, you know not the power of Christ to convert it into sweetness. Paul in prison at Rome, and John at Patmos, were in very bitter circumstances; but would they have changed them for any other, seeing that those circumstances were the opportunity for the revelation of Christ? God cannot let me find both sweetness here, and sweetness in Christ. If I *will* have the sweetness of circumstances, I shall not have the sweetness of Christ in the bitter circumstances, for it is He who brightens up the dark circumstances. Let me once be brought to see that without the bitter circumstances I could not have such knowledge of Christ, and I shall murmur at them no more. I accept them; nay, I glory in tribulation. It is not only that I am quiet and resigned, braving my circumstances in the strength of natural character. No, I *know* they are bitter; but I don't occupy myself with the bitterness, because God has given me to know more of Christ in it; so much so, that I should be sorry that they should be altered, lest I should lose what I have learnt of Christ in them, making them sweet. I am thus prepared for tribulation, but I am also assured of finding in Christ a *greater* and *fuller* delight; so that the tribulation is hailed as another opportunity for disclosing to my heart, as a sufferer here, the excellency and virtue of Christ. I am neither vexed nor disappointed; I am in the happiness of God. I joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation. Amen.

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## PAUL AND THE GALATIANS.

IN the beginning of Chapter i. of this Epistle, so full of the divine energy of the Holy Ghost in the Apostle Paul, in contending for the faith he had once delivered to the Galatians, which had become clouded and dim, we find the *purpose* of God pressed from his burdened spirit. The purpose of God the Father to deliver us from this present evil age, exhibited in the greeting, "Peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age." Well did the Apostle personally know this purpose of God. He was the chief of

sinner—the most wicked man in *heart* that ever trod the earth. One whose heart was filled with the stern purpose of blotting out if he could, the name of Jesus from the face of the earth; and on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, he is stricken to the earth, and sees the Blessed One in the glory, and finds in one moment that he was the chief of sinners; and that as such, God had laid hold of him, and against his will, had separated him to Christ, delivering him from his sins and from this present evil age. Acts ix. 1-22.

He speaks to the Galatians. They had been getting back into the world in its first form; instead of going on as he was, with a risen and ascended Christ. They had been getting under the Law, and the observation of days—“weak and beggarly elements,” as the spirit calls them, *things that accredited the flesh*. “When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them, which by nature are no Gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather ~~are~~ known of God, how turn ye *again* to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire *again* to be in bondage.” (Gal. iv. 8, 9.) He finds them *again*, he says, desiring to be in bondage to such things.

Then in the last chapter (ch. vi. 14,) he says, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” He found that the world to him was a judged thing; out of which he had been separated to Christ. That he was a Nazarite, as it were, separated to God. And he was keeping his Nazariteship practically and undefiled; and was for this reason suffering persecution for the Cross of Christ. Are we then, my readers, walking thus in fellowship with the apostle? Have we realized the delivering work of Jesus, and the purpose of God the Father as he did? And are we bringing the power of the Cross to bear upon all here? Christ tried if the world would be reconciled to God; and headed by a prince, a God of this age, it gave Him a cross! A cross to which attached a curse in the scriptures, which they who professed to be the exclusive people of God possessed. It was *He* who hung there, who possessed true value in the apostle’s eyes. His heart swelled within him at the thought of Him whom he loved being there. And the world which had placed Him there had its true value to him; it was a crucified thing. God had ordered the world aright at the beginning; but when man was driven from Paradise, another order of things came in under Cain:—an order to

gratify the flesh, and make the world, thus departed from God, a comfortable place to live in and possess; Cain went out, and, with "vagabond" written on his brow, built a city, and embellished the world which was lying under a curse to make it a place of delight. (Gen. iv.) The cross revealed all this; brought out all, and showed it in its true light. Is there anything there in it you can enjoy? Does not the cross of a rejected Christ cast a shadow of its approaching judgment across the world? Can a Christian be happy in its spirit, its pursuits, its aims? (He has his own full joy outside the world altogether.) Could we be happy or comfortable going back into a house where a beloved friend had been murdered; and we had barely escaped? A place where Christ had no place to lay His head? Or are we sitting so lightly by all in it that we would not care to find that Satan had swept *all* away in the morning as we arose!

But there is still a deeper thing in the verse. One which judges us more deeply; the words of the apostle, "I unto the world." Are we realizing that we are one with Him who was crucified there, and thus set free from every claim of the world which crucified Him could have on us? What *fellowship* has He with those of it now? Are we then walking there in the sense of our practical Nazariteship? Walking as those whom God *has* put apart, not only delivering us from our sins, and this present evil age, but from the world! We must live in it, and toil in it, and it may be, suffer in it too; but we can learn to die to the world; and if He wills, die OUT OF IT as well; but we know that God has no part or lot in its aims or pursuits, no fellowship with it whatsoever. We are a people, as Christians, who have not *to be* separated; but who *have been* separated to God, like Jesus thus in character. He was the perfect One in its midst; with all His titles and glories He passed through it; and one to look at Him would say, "here is one who has no part or lot here." His heart, His mind, His soul was above. One to see Him must know this.

Are we then realizing in its present power our fellowship with Him, and with Paul in Gal. vi. 14? Are we practically freed from the spirit of a world, that would gladly never hear the mention of the name of Jesus? Learning to glory like Paul in bearing in his body those marks of reproach (Gal. vi. 17.); "those beautiful initials of Jesus;" the marks which Satan had branded on the apostle for his name? Every

mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and "O, righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but these have known that thou hast sent me" said the divine Master. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (John ii. 17.)

The accursed tree was the reward,  
Which this sad world did give  
To Him who gave His precious life,  
That this lost world might live.

And has this world a charm for me,  
Where Jesus suffered thus?  
No! I have died to all its charms,  
Through Jesus' wondrous Cross.

## "THE OTHER SIDE."

MATTHEW XIV, 22.

DEAR Reader, I want you to look at this. Not for a few minutes, or half-an-hour; but hour by hour, and day by day. I would have you fix your gaze up and away to the other side of death—the other side of judgment; and if you be a true Christian, on the glory awaiting you on the blissful shores of Immanuel's land! Every child of God knows that they are travelling to the other side, that it is their privilege and blessing to say, with a thankful heart, "We are now no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Heb. xiii. 14.) Oh! what a wonderful and glorious mystery it is that we should be called the "Sons of God," and if sons, heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ! and oh! blessed word! "*inheritors*" of the kingdom of heaven. But I think that many Christians forget, or seem to forget, that they are on the way to their Father's house! Oh! that these few feeble words may stir them up to live more as the followers of Jesus *ought* to live, letting their light so shine before men, that seeing their good works, they may glorify their Father which is in heaven. When the disciples were with Jesus, we find, because it was a "desert place" He "constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the *other side*." And so He still does to those who are His. There are some



who follow Him closely—who are daily and hourly in communion with Him, as His disciples were; and to those He says, "As you know that you are mine, and all that I have is yours, set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth." "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God; believe also in me." "Look away from all the cares and surroundings of this life and look up and away to the other side—to the glory in store for you there." Yes, beloved, so God would have us live, looking with a fixed eye, as it were, into heaven itself; entering by faith into the very holiest, relying on His promise, "My presence shall go with thee," and believing that though here we may have trouble and weariness, still, in the end, "He will give us rest." (Exodus xxxiii. 14.) What a precious promise is that one also for the believer, in Isaiah xliii. 2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." This is a strong staff to lean upon, is it not, dear reader? and have we not much to comfort and *cheer us on our upward journey? The way home may be* very long and dreary—the road may be very dark and rough; but when we remember that our sufferings here are but for a "moment," we will be able to sing that sweet little line from our heart.

"Oh! how will recompense his smile,  
The sufferings of this little while."

And oh! shall it not, beloved? Shall it not amply more than recompense us for any little trials and sufferings we may have borne here silently, mayhap patiently, rejoicing that we were counted *worthy* to suffer for His sake? Shall it not when we see his tender smile beaming upon us, and hear his loving commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Oh! when we are in the glory on the other side, and can survey from the glorious battlements of the New Jerusalem, all the way which the Lord has led us, how we will wonder at all the care and anxiety, all the trouble and fretting, which our little life down here cost us; and how we will grieve to see others (as we had often done) toiling and striving to gain some paltry height in the world's estimation, or wearing themselves out with their efforts to lay by stores for days which may never arrive. Oh! dear friends, I do

not say that we should not be careful about our worldly affairs, that we should let things go to "rack and ruin," as the saying is, and not try to make them better; but I *do* say that a Christian should have the same characteristics as had the Nazarite of old; and let the unshaven head and loosely flowing locks be typical of their utter carelessness and disregard of mere worldly position and eminence. While time lasts, there will be Marthas in this world, troubled, and ever anxious about the affairs of this life: but oh! how much more blessed to be like Mary! thinking but of Jesus, learning of Him, and sitting at His feet. Oh! dear Christian reader, though your worldly prospects may be very poor, though you may be sad and weary and lonely, surely the same thought that sustained our blessed Master through all His years of loneliness and sorrow, ought to cheer you in yours! Remember, "*He for the joy that was set before Him*, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. xii. 2.) Even so, then, think of the glorious prospect that is before you, even the same set before Him; for He says, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." (Rev. iii. 21.) And we know that now we are "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Oh! dear Christian, when you think of the bliss that is awaiting you on "the other side," the little troubles and trials you experience on your homeward journey, will all fade like the morning mist? Would that we could all keep our eyes more steadfastly fixed upon that distant shore! Would that we walked more upon the mountain tops, watching and waiting for the bright and morning star to arise. Oh! that we could think less of our own trials and afflictions, (though they may sometimes appear as if they would overwhelm us); and, raising our eyes, trustfully see that "behind a frowning Providence, He hides a smiling face;" and that *everything*—trials, losses, temptations, sorrows, all things work together for good to them that love God. Then he would walk with a firmer tread the path, it may be, a sorrowful one; but, as the days and months fly by—an *ever shortening one*, which leads to our eternal home.

Oh! then, let us strive, beloved, to live more daily and hourly, "looking unto Jesus," or, rather, "looking *off* unto Jesus." (Heb. xii. 2.) Looking off from all other objects

—worldly and earthly cares and concerns—unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. “Looking off” from all the temptations of pleasures which would lure our hearts from resting above, and *looking* with a single eye and steadfast faith, unto Him who, “*for the joy that was set before Him*, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” And let our eyes and our hearts be fixed upward and onward and heavenward and homeward, to “the other side,” and the pleasures which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” (1 Cor. ii. 9.) Oh! then, amidst life’s hot and weary race, let us often invigorate and refresh ourselves by the thought of the time when we will be “for ever with the Lord,” and live so that when the summons home reaches us, gladly striking our tents, and bidding farewell to our wilderness life, we may be *ready* to enter the land of promise—the house of our Father in heaven.

Here in the body pent,  
Absent from Him we roam;  
Yet nightly pitch our moving tent  
A day’s march nearer home.

My Father’s House on high,  
Home of my soul, how near  
At times, to faith’s transpiercing eye,  
Thy golden gates appear.

My thirsty spirit faints  
To reach the land I love—  
The bright inheritance of saints!  
Jerusalem above.

A.

## PSALMS II. AND VIII.

*Continued.*

THIS bond of union and formation of a body was unknown in Old Testament days. Suppose we were to meet Abraham in his day, or a saint in any period up to the day of Pentecost, and were to ask such an one, “Are you united by the Holy Ghost to a Man at God’s right hand?” he would not understand what we meant. If we asked the same man, “Are you saved?” he would at once tell us he was; and bless

God for it. But there was no glorified Man in heaven for believers to be united to; (Jesus, as the Eternal Son), was there Himself, God, and with God, from all eternity. And "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (See John vii. 39.) Salvation was the same in all ages—all were saved, from Abel downwards, by faith in the coming sacrifice of Christ? but the Head was not yet in heaven, nor was the Holy Ghost yet given to unite the members to the Head. All things good that ever were done in the world were done by the power of the Spirit of God. He moved upon the face of the waters in creation, quickened souls, spake by the prophets, instructed the saints, &c.; but He did not then unite believers into a body. Hence the "Body of Christ" was the mystery unknown in Old Testament days: "In other ages it was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostle and prophets by the Spirit." The mystery of Christ and the Church which was given to us through the apostle Paul. Union with Christ now is by the Holy Ghost, who dwells in the believer's body: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you." Again, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." (1 Cor. vi. 17-19.) There is no union with Christ in Scripture but this. And again, "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. xii. 13—read from verse 12 to 26).

The formation of this Body began at Pentecost, at the descent of the Holy Ghost. When, therefore, will the formation of the Body end? If we are raised up together with Christ, and seated in the heavenlies in Him, by faith; for what do we wait? Simply that He may come and take us there in fact. Hence the second coming of Christ ends the dispensation of the calling out and gathering together of the Body of Christ. As soon as it is completed, Christ takes the Church to Himself. Raising the dead saints, changing the living, and taking all up to be for ever with Himself. "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." (1 Thes. iv. 16, 17.)

The third place where we find the 8th Psalm quoted in the New Testament is important to our present subject: it is in 1st Cor. xv. 27. A Scripture which speaks of Christ as the Second Man—the Last Adam—raised up from among

the dead, first-fruits thus of them that sleep: by man came death—by man came resurrection; Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's (and they only) at His coming. The chapter treats of the resurrection of the redeemed. The language is plain: sown in corruption, raised in incorruption—sown in dishonour—raised in glory—sown in weakness, raised in power—sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body: these terms only applying to those of the first resurrection. The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed.

Let us sum up the places where the 8th Psalm is quoted:—

1. Heb. ii.—The Son of Man exalted; waiting for the headship of all things in the millennial age to come.

2. Eph. i. 22.—While He thus waits, He is given as Head over all things to the Church, which is His body; and which is being formed out of Jew and Gentile, and united to Him.

3. 1 Cor. xv. 27.—This headship taken at the first resurrection, when the joint-heirs, who have put off their bodies by death are raised; and those who have not slept ("we who are alive and remain") are changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; and all are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, according to 1 Thess. iv., and many other Scriptures.

"Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written" (1 Cor. xv. 54; Isa. xxv. 8), "Death is swallowed up in victory." If we examine chapters xxiv. xxviii., of this prophet, we find that when this takes place, it will be at a corresponding time, with the universal judgment and subversion of all powers; the judgment of the Quick, which takes place preparatory to the setting up of God's Kingdom in Zion. Restoring the Jews—taking the vail of idolatry from the face of all nations—gathering the dispersed outcasts of Israel—and setting up the long-looked-for glorious Kingdom *in the world*—heretofore, as we have seen, proposed in grace—now brought in by judgment—the millennial age. While the saints who have been taken up, have their places in the *heavenly* glory; when the dispensation of the fulness of times will have come, and all things in Heaven and Earth will be gathered together, in and under Christ, in whom we have obtained an inheritance." (See Eph. i. 10, 11.)

The body of Christ, therefore, is the complement of saints, united to Christ glorified, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven at Pentecost. Waiting till He comes, and then taken up to be for ever with the Lord.

There was no such body found in Old Testament days; nor will there be in the days of the Millennial Kingdom. It is peculiar to the dispensation in which we live; and *all* believers are members of His body, and members one of another.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.)

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## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM AS PRESENTED IN THE PAR- ABLES IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

(No. 2.)

WE have had the announcement of the Kingdom in the iii. and iv. chaps.; and for aught contained in them we might suppose that it was hailed with universal joy, and that there was a ready submission to Jesus and a heart-felt welcome from the nation at large. But passing on to the v. chap., we become immediately conscious of a change. The being born a Jew is no longer the ground on which He can be received into the Kingdom, (and this is evidently the ground in the previous chapters). He who knew what was in the heart of man, knew that the righteousness which was meet for the Kingdom was distasteful to man, and that both it and Himself, the King, would be rejected. Doubtless, even at this time, the Lord was discerning the appearance of that hatred which ended in rejection and death.

Hence it is, that in v. and two following chapters, the heirs are found in association with poverty and persecution, the objects of man's malice. In a word, they are the rejected followers of a rejected Messiah. His rejection is the keynote of the sermon on the mount. And from this point the Kingdom enters upon a new phase, but which is not fully brought out till we come to the chap. xiii. Here it is simply, that the King is rejected. But while this entails suffering upon the heirs, it also brings them into greater blessing and privileges. Prophecy foretold the greatness of the Kingdom; but it is only here that we have the increased blessing which ever accompanies suffering endured for the Lord's sake. In short, it is not now, blessed are they who

have power and dominion given unto them, and who are consequently in the high places of the earth (where they will be by-and-bye); but blessed are the meek, the poor in spirit (*i.e.*, such an one as the world would despise), the mourners. Blessed are those hungering and thirsting after righteousness—a clear proof that righteousness, in this place of the Kingdom, does not exist, at least, is not a characteristic. The fact is, the King was going away, and suffering and oppression would be the lot of the heirs until He came again.

Perhaps it will not be unprofitable to dwell a little here.

And what a privilege is ours to know that not only were men inspired by the Holy Ghost to give us these gospels, but also that the *order* of the relation to the events by Matthew is inspired, and also the *order* of the relation in the other gospels. But from Mark we learn that this discourse was not all spoken at the same time (Mark always relates in the order of time). Matthew alone gives us in one consecutive discourse the new position of the heirs, morally. It is clear that when the saints possess the Kingdom (Dan. vii. 22-27) this sermon, as a whole will not apply. It supposes the King *rejected* and *absent*; that wicked men are triumphant and rule. Hence all in the world is antagonistic to the Kingdom. Hence the sufferings of the heirs. Hence, too, the Kingdom of the Heavens would suffer violence, and the violent would take it by force. This is not the grace that saves him that worketh not, it is the very contrast.

The blessedness here spoken of is that of the Kingdom; the Church does not appear. Of course the Church has it; but it has more. The privileges and duties of the Church are higher, and go beyond the Kingdom. And it is only the Kingdom in view here. Yet it is clearly intimated that the blessedness of those in the new position of the Kingdom was greater than it would have been, had there been no rejection. For here is brought out their relationship to God, who is called their *Father in Heaven*. God would act as a Father to them, and deal with them as with children. The Prophets spoke of God as Father; here in the Gospel, it is in a somewhat dearer way, for they would be children suffering for the sake of His only begotten Son. Still they could not say as we can now in the Church, that God is our Father, *because* He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—"My Father and your Father." There is no such link as

this with the heirs (as such) of the Kingdom. Jesus speaks to them of God as "Their Father." To the Church He says, "*My* Father and *your* Father." We have the moral feature of the Kingdom. Hence it is called the Kingdom of God, for the qualities insisted upon are not peculiar to the circumstances of the Kingdom of Heaven. That is, righteousness and obedience took the form of meekness and long-suffering, because evil for the time was triumphing within the sphere of the Kingdom. The only way to the Kingdom of Heaven was to seek the Kingdom of *God and His righteousness*.

Hypocrites are found in it, and false brethren; when it is established in power everything that offends will be taken away. They are nominally in the Kingdom—within its precincts—for the words, *Kingdom of Heaven*, always includes the idea of space, while *Kingdom of God* does not.

But the grand feature which would characterise them in their conduct to the world, is the submission even to the blessing and praying for those who despitefully used them. The principle of the Kingdom, as far as they go, must assimilate with the future thing, soon to be brought out, namely, the Church.

(*To be continued, Lord willing.*)

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Q.—"W," Oswestry, Salop, writes,—"*I find that some Christians maintain that the Holy Ghost dwells in Christendom. Now I have always thought . . . that the Holy Ghost dwells exclusively in the Church. I would be so glad if you would give me your thoughts about it through the medium of your 'Answers to Correspondents.'*"

A.—I think that a right understanding of the distinction between the Church as the "*Body of Christ*" (Eph. i. 22, 23,) unto which believers are baptised by the Holy Ghost, (1 Cor. xii. 13) and thus united to Christ, exalted and glorified in heaven (1 Cor. vi. 17); and the "*House of God*," a "habitation of God through the spirit," (Eph. ii. 21, 22,) in the world, will make the matter in your question simple and plain. When Christ was glorified as man to heaven, the Holy Ghost (not previously given, see Jno. vii. 39) descended from heaven and took up His abode in the saints, on the day of Pentecost, as God's house. (Acts ii.) The Church thus



begun, and set up as God's witness and abode through His Spirit, is styled "the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) This "House" was, as it were, a co-extensive thing at the first with the "Body," its other aspect, and was the true thing which God Himself fitly framed together; a member in which was a living one, and in union with Christ the Head, by the Holy Ghost. But we find that immediately after its being set up, men began to build on the foundation, wood, hay, stubble; as well as gold, silver, precious stones, &c., (1 Cor. iii.): and as a consequence, the House as man built it, began to assume vast proportions, and entirely disproportionate to the Body, the true thing. But still *the Holy Ghost did not leave the House*. And the House was as far as man's responsibility went, "God's building." "The temple of God and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Cor. iii. 9-16, 17); *i.e.* collectively as in a temple, which is a different thought from the body of the believer, being the temple of the Holy Ghost, as in 1 Cor. vi. 19. The House of God drifted soon into what the apostle speaks of in 2 Tim. ii. 19-21, like to a "Great House" containing vessels to honour and dishonour; quite a different state of things from 1 Tim. iii. 15, and which has characterised Christendom ever since; and at which judgment must begin. (1 Pet. iv. 17).

So that we see, I trust, dear friend, that the Holy Ghost in the first instance, baptises all believers since His coming down into one Body, ("There is one body and one Spirit," Eph. iv. 4) uniting them to Christ as Head; and God dwells amongst them as a habitation through His Spirit. What a wondrous thought, and what a wondrous privilege; and how much has the Church forgotten her calling! But not only so, He dwells in the "House" here below, and *professing* Christians (as well as true Christians) are responsible for His presence; and are, as far as His presence goes, thus responsible for the presence of the Holy Ghost; although not, of course, "sealed" as the true believer, and indwelt by Him. Thus we often find, as the other day in Italy, a remarkable work of the Holy Ghost, where there may not have been previously a single living member of the "Body of Christ."

A right understanding of the Church as the "Body of Christ," composed of living members, and the "House," or professing Church, is the key to much of the teaching of the Epistles.

### "SERVING THEE."

FATHER, I know that all my life,  
Is portioned out for me ;  
The changes that will surely come,  
I do not fear to see.  
But I ask Thee for a present mind,  
Intent on serving Thee.

I ask Thee for a thankful love,  
Through constant watching wise,  
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,  
And to wipe the tearful eyes,  
And a heart at leisure from itself,  
To soothe and sympathise.

I would not have the restless will,  
That hurries to and fro.  
Seeking for some great thing to do,  
Or secret thing to know ;  
I would be treated as a child,  
And guided where to go.

I ask Thee for the daily strength,  
To none that ask denied,  
And a mind to blend with outward life,  
Still keeping at thy side ;  
Content to fill a little space,  
So Thou be glorified.

And if some things I do not ask,  
In my cup of blessing be,  
I would have my spirit filled the more  
With grateful love to Thee,  
More careful than to serve Thee much,  
To serve Thee carefully.

There are briars besetting every path,  
Which call for patient care ;  
There is a crook in every lot,  
And an earnest need of prayer ;  
But a lonely heart that leans on Thee,  
Is happy everywhere.

For a service which Thy love imparts  
Can have no bonds for me,  
For my secret heart is taught the truth  
That makes Thy children free ;  
And a life of self-renouncing love,  
Is a life of liberty.

When Israel was a slave, God became his Redeemer. When he dwelt in tents, God abode in a tent also. When in conflict, God presented Himself as Captain of the Lord's host. When settled in peace, God established Himself in the house of His glory. The interval was the probation of His people on earth; God abode in the tent, and even when His Ark is taken, he interposes in grace in deliverance.

Christ also, since we are born of a woman, was born of a woman; since His people *were* under law, was born under law. And *now*, that he will have a heavenly people, He is on high for us.

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## NAZARITESHIP, OR SEPARATION TO GOD.

THERE is a principle which runs through the entire Scriptures, which is but little heeded and followed in these days of abounding evil—days when we find the name of Jesus attached to the grossest wordliness, evil practice, and corruption of the truth, and used as a covering to almost every device of the enemy of souls, who cordially hates the name of Jesus, and who, when he could not succeed, as at first he attempted, to blot out that name from the world, successfully carries out his purposes and designs under its shelter and apparent sanction. Satan, when he finds it does not answer his ends to be a roaring lion, does not cease his endeavours to delude and destroy. But he takes another form—that of a serpent, wily and subtle. This is far more to be feared than his open power. The believer, when in the midst of trial and persecution, finds God near, and looks up to Him out of the trial and never is so happy. But by and bye, when Satan finds that his persecutions only produce a brighter testimony, and fuller confidence in God, he changes his tactics and becomes a seducer, cleverest and most successful when he brings his seductions under the name of Jesus, and more likely to succeed.

Would that there was more familiar hearkening to the voice of the Good Shepherd, a deeper acquaintance with the tones of His voice! If there were, there would be less power in the seductions of the enemy; his wiles and his seductions would be detected and exposed, and the heart kept steady and at rest.

The desire of unity in the heart of the Lord's people has

been always a dear one. It was dear to the heart of Jesus when He prayed "that they all may be one." But we must always remember that His name cannot be identified with evil and falsehood. Such a thought is horrible. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." We bless His name for it that He saves His people out of the midst of all the corruptions in the world; His grace is infinite in this. It is His prerogative—He is sovereign in this, and He does it in the display of His grace. But the thought that because He does this, that He thereby sanctions the evil in which He finds them, is revolting to the spiritual mind. But while He is sovereign in all this, and goes where He pleases, His servants must be obedient to His mind as revealed. 'Tis then they find themselves in a position in which He can bless them and be with them, where nothing is allowed and sanctioned dishonouring to His name, or contrary to His truth.

The principle of which we speak is that of *Separation from evil, to God*. It is one largely dwelt upon in the Word of God in all dispensations. We will look at some of the instances.

I. When the world had gone into idolatry and the worship of demons (as we learn from Josh. xxiv. 2; Deut. xxxii. 17. 1; 1 Cor. x. 20)—even the family of him of whom it was said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem,"—God separated to Himself one man, Abraham, who was descended from the family, and whose ancestors were idolators (Josh. xxiv. 2)—"Get thee out from thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house" (Genesis xii. 1); and Abraham, thus separated to God, becomes His witness in the world, and is in a position to know his mind—and the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do" (Gen. xviii. 17), and he was called the "friend of God."

II. The nation of Israel, when slaves in Egypt, were redeemed out of it and separated to God, that He might dwell among them (Ex. xxix. 46,) and that they may be His witnesses in the world that He was the one true God. "Ye are my witnesses . . . that I (Jehovah) am God." (Is. xliii. 12.)

When that nation made the golden calf and worshipped it as the god which brought them up out of the land of Egypt (Ex. xxxii. 1-6,) Moses came down from the mountain,

where he had been with God, and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." (Ex. xxxii. 26-28.) Faithfulness to God was in separating themselves to Him, when the evil was there: and we find how He owned their faithfulness, in Deut. xxxiii. 8-10,—“And of Levi he said, . . . Who said to his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.”

Moses, too, conscious that God could not identify Himself with the evil of the people, took the Tent or Tabernacle and pitched it outside the camp of Israel; and “every one which sought the Lord went out unto the Tabernacle of the Congregation which was without the camp:” and the Lord owned the faithfulness of His servant who had thus recognised what was due to Him, thus putting himself in a position to receive the communications of God: and we read, “The Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” (Ex. xxxiii. 7-11.)

III. When Israel were apostate in their land, and had openly professed to be worshippers of Baal, and that Elijah was raised up of God to re-establish the worship of Jehovah, there were 7000 souls, unknown and unheeded, faithful to the true God, who had *not* bowed the knee to the image of Baal. God saw them in their humble testimony: it was nothing striking or outward, such as that of Elijah; no display of power; but what was grateful to God, and what He owned, and could point to, separation in heart to Him, and faithfulness in the midst of corruption.—“They have *not* bowed the knee to the image of Baal”—the great thing, when every one else *had* done so, they had *not* done it, but in faithfulness had separated themselves to God. (1 Kings xix.)

IV. When the false prophets and the popular falsehoods

had possession of the ear, heart, and the desire of Judah, the words of God were found by Jeremiah (see Jer. xv. 15-21), and he did eat them—digested them inwardly—and they became the joy and rejoicing of his heart. The word of God had its own separating power in him, and he sat not in the assembly of the mockers, but sat alone, filled with indignation. The answer of the Lord comes to him, “If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: *let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.*”

V. Again, in the day when the remnant of Judah and Benjamin returned from the Babylonish captivity to the city of Jerusalem, separating themselves from the Gentiles, (see Ezra and Nehemiah) we find that on this return to a *divine position* and a *divine city*, there was,—

1st, Separation from those whose genealogy could not be found or produced. (Ezra i. 59-63.)

2nd, Separation from those of the world who wanted to rebuild the temple with them. (Ezra iv. 1-6.)

3rd, Separation from Gentile wives, and children of such—all that was not *of Israel*. (Ezra x. 1, &c.)

VI. Again, when this returned remnant had fallen into corruption after their return from Babylon, when their words were stout against the Lord, and the proud esteemed happy, and those who wrought wickedness set up; when all was ruin and corruption again. (See Malachi iii. 13-17.) We find a little company separating themselves from the abounding evil, to God; a little flock, driven together by their spiritual wants, who feared the Lord, and spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

VII. The Good Shepherd Himself separates Himself from the Jewish fold, into which He had entered by the door, and where His words, and His works, and Himself were rejected. And He then becomes the door by which the remnant who had heard His voice might go out of that fold to Him. “He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out” of that which He could no longer recognise and own. (John x.)

VIII. The church of God should have maintained her place of separation from evil in the world, and put out from amongst themselves that wicked person. (1 Cor. v).

Regarding the worship and service of God we are told,—

IX. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath he that believeth with an infidel (unbeliever)? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, *come out from among them and be ye separate*, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor. vi. 14-18). Thus separating from the worldly and from unbelievers, we take practically the position in which God can dwell and walk with us; and we enter practically into the relationship which grace has given, that of sons and daughters of the Father, who is *Jehovah Almighty*.

X. When the house of God, instead of maintaining its position as God's witness in the world—"The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15)—has been filled with corruptions and iniquity, and has its vessels not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, some to honour and some to dishonour (2 Tim. ii. 19, 20), thus becoming a "great house," the faithful disciple is not to rest satisfied with its corruptions; nor can he remedy the evil and purge the house, nor can he get out of it; and his resource is the same principle, "separation from evil;" he is to "depart from iniquity." While it is his joy to know that in such a state of things "The Lord knoweth them that are His," still the responsibility of each one who names the name of the Lord is to "depart from iniquity," separating himself thus to God in the midst of the evil, exercising the spirit of the Nazarite, when the enemy is an inward one in the bosom of the church (Samson's source of strength was his Nazariteship, when the Philistines were in the midst of the people in the land). He is then in the position to be a vessel unto honour, who has purged himself from the vessels to dishonour, separated or sanctified and meet for the Master's use. His separation is not deny-

ing that the others are vessels, but they are vessels identified with that which does dishonour to Christ as the Holy and True, and therefore soiled vessels. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

The moment we see a disciple who has thus purged himself, and departed from iniquity, we see one whom we can recognise. God's eye may discern him when mixed up with the corruption, for He knows them that are His. We can discern him when he has separated himself to God; and with such we can then walk, through grace, following righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Tim. ii. 19-22.)

XI. When Israel rejected their Messiah, and the testimony to a risen and exalted Christ, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the whole system is given up to judgment, and consequently the exhortation to those who had received Him is, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach"—(Heb. xiii. 13),—separating thus from a judged system to God, as the Christian is bound to do from any religion which accredits the flesh, and connects itself with the world, and not with that which entereth within the veil.

XII. It is impossible that Christ and falsehood can be identified. Fellowship with the Father and His Son must be according to the essential character of God, which is "Light," and in whom is no darkness at all; and "if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1 John i. 6.)

It is true that "he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey" (Isaiah lix. 15), but the Lord will own his faithfulness when His day comes, as one who, with a little strength, had kept His word, and not denied and falsified His name. (Rev. iii. 8.)

Is my Christian reader thus a Nazarite to God?

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## "THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE."

LUKE xiii. 11-47.

How many Christians are distressed with a spirit of bondage! Many long years, it may be, bowed down, never rising to the glorious height of their calling, they are in a sad state, and



literally "bowed together"—their eyes always turned inwards or downwards, like this poor woman in Luke xiii.

Through Satan's work she was bound; her disease was one of "infirmity;" its duration long—some eighteen years—so that she "could in no wise lift up herself."

Christians in such a state are totally incapacitated from working for the Lord. They are "infirm:" they cannot testify for Him; for who would admire the testimony of one "bowed double," as it were, with this "spirit of bondage?" They know not a risen and glorified Christ—now in heaven—as their all-absorbing treasure. If they did, their hearts would be where He is, at God's right hand; and they would consequently and of necessity be lifted up, straight to *Him!* for where the treasure *is*, *there* will the *heart* be also. (Luke xii. 34.) And the word of the Holy Ghost to us is, "If ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection [or mind] on things above, *not* on things on the earth, *for* ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii.) Ah! yes, if the heart be centred on things above, we may be pretty sure the eyes will be turned heavenwards, and the whole conduct and conversation will correspond. Satan's great object against us is to rob us of the full enjoyment of our blessing. And, sad to say, he often succeeds in this. Many Christians are thus deprived, not only of their own joy and happiness, but of glorifying God. They lose the sense (if ever they enjoyed it) of the blessed truth that they have died with Christ, and are now a risen people. Consequently, instead of living as those who realise that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has broken the tie that once bound them to earth and self, they go mourning all their days—hanging their heads downwards, and necessarily their hands—with their eyes turned inwards, bemoaning the sin and corruption they find there, and grovelling on the earth, seeing only its straws and dust, as if their hopes and expectations were from *it*, and as if they were a people which belonged to it.

Oh! how few of us really enter into the blessed fact that the cords that bound our hearts to earth are snapped by Jesus' hand!—that we are a "peculiar people," belonging to heaven, born from above, let down here for a "little while" to witness for Jesus, and soon to be "caught up" again—having the coming of Jesus as our heavenly hope—truly

bright and blessed—a home with Him in the "Father's House" as the only home we know. Oh! that home of Love's preparing!—our heavenly place of rest! There *with Jesus!* The Lord grant us grace that, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we may realise our calling—that here on earth we are but strangers and pilgrims journeying through a desert, but all the while citizens of heaven (according to Phil. iii. 20), all our glorious expectations being *there*. "Things on the earth" occupy those who have this spirit of bondage. Their minds are filled with thoughts of self or of the world; and so it must ever be, when their eyes are never turned heavenwards, to be dazzled with the glory which we should even now apprehend by faith.

O, soul bound thus by Satan under the sad power of this spirit of bondage, *Jesus* must be thy resource, even as He was to this poor woman. "He called her." Harken now to His blessed voice calling thee, and mark what He says, for the power you need is in His very words—"Woman, *thou art loosed from thine infirmity.*" Wondrous word! uttered by the Lord of Life and Glory, as He laid His hand upon her—"Thou *art* loosed." And it is for thee, dear brother or sister in the Lord, who has been bound and harrassed by Satan, it may be these many years, to know on the authority of Him who cannot lie, that "*thou art loosed!*" The death and resurrection of Jesus, on whom you believe, has already done its mighty work, and you are now free; "thou art loosed from thine infirmity." Well, then, walk straight, with head erect, in perfect liberty, as a child of God, your eyes turned to Him, and *rejoice* in the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free! "If the Son shall make you free, then are ye free indeed."

With this woman it was but a bodily ailment; with you it is *far worse*—it is an unhealthy state of soul. But hearing the words of Jesus, and being touched by His hand, she "immediately was made straight." Ah! now her eyes were no more turned inwards upon herself, or downwards upon the earth: now they looked to *Jesus*. And the result with her was the same as it would be with you (only with you in a much higher degree). Not only was she made happy herself, but she "glorified God." Glory was brought to Him. The "religious" people of that day were displeased, and spake evil of the One who was now doubtless dear to her; but what did it matter—God was glorified!—H. W. T.

## SHALL I EVER DIE?

"Of course you will, sooner or later," most men will answer.

"I DO NOT KNOW" is the answer which most Bible students ought to give.

Of believers, it is only those who have a special revelation that they will die, as Peter had (John xxi. 19; 2 Peter i. 14), and Paul (2 Timothy iii. 6), who are justified in saying "Certainly, I shall die." Peter *could* say so, for the Lord Jesus had promised to him in particular the martyr's crown. Paul knew the same of himself. But *I* am only an ordinary Christian, and I do not pretend to be either a Peter or a Paul; and I do not either pretend to have had any revelations direct from the Lord Himself to me about my own private self in particular; therefore, I am obliged to be satisfied with the general light which God, in His word, gives to His family as such—that clear and broad light which shines upon the people of Christ as such.

I am thus obliged to be satisfied with such words as these. (Heb. ix. 27.) *As* it is appointed unto men [man as a sinner, not (as often wrongly quoted) unto *all* men] once to die, but after this the judgment [so far we read of what awaits man in fallen nature, death and the judgment; then comes what is true of the believer only]; (v. 28), "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

AS mere man is a sinner, and as such is appointed to death and judgment.

SO the believer (every believer) had all the penalty due to his sins borne by Christ; he looks for Him. "To them that look for him he will appear a second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 28). Again (1 Thess. i. 9), "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Again (1 Cor. xv. 51), "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

Again (1 Thess. iv. 15), "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven

with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise *first*; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Again, John (Rev. i. 7) says, "Behold he cometh with clouds;" and the Lord says to John, and to us too (ch. iii. 10), "Behold I come quickly." And (in ch. xxii. 7 and 12), "Behold I come quickly;" and in v. 20, when the spirit and the bride (in v. 17) invite Him to come—"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come;" He answers, "Surely, I come quickly. Amen." To which John replies, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

These Scriptures, and many others show, first, that the path of the believer, as laid down in Scripture, leads the mind, not down to the grave, but up to meet the Lord at His coming; and secondly, that the believers in apostolic days did look up that bright shining way to the Lord returning as their hope, even as it becomes those "whose conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. iii. 20.)

Thus did they as I, having no special communication of my death, act up to the word of the two in white apparel, who stood looking up steadfastly toward heaven (when a cloud had received Jesus from their sight),—"Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts i. 10, 11.)

Being myself only one of the flock, nor bell-bearer, nor shepherd, the prospect of the flock is my prospect, nor more nor less. Special communication to myself, as an individual as to what ought to be looked for by myself in particular have I none, so I must content myself with the hope set before all Christians, and seek to be like unto one that waits for his Lord from heaven, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. (Phil. iii. 21).

It must be so; the Lord has not yet fulfilled the promise which He gave to poor, self-confident Peter. (See John xiii. 38, and xiv. 1-3). "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till

thou hast denied me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you. 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." Yes, such is our hope, "that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4).

Some one may say—If these things are so in the Scriptures, how come the religious people of our day not to see them ?

To this I answer, the Pentecostal Christians were by faith and through the Holy Ghost, occupied with the ascended Lord, who, having by His death cleared them of all guilt, was in heaven caring for all their heavenly and spiritual interests, and about to come again that He might receive them unto Himself.

Few of the religious, now-a-days, know even what the value of His death and resurrection is to them ; they therefore cannot study His glory in heaven ; and they do not long for His return, or even wish to do so.

It may be said, "Are you alone right and everyone else wrong ? I reply, "Thank God I am not alone in this ; but if I were alone, I would be alone in truth rather than with a multitude in error."

But are you sure you are right ? Of this I am sure ; first, that God's word is with me ; and secondly, that God will not suffer those that prayerfully search His word, and lean not to their own understanding, to err in their faith and hope.

Certainly, Christ, in His coming, and not death, was the hope of the early Christians. Certainly, too, *it is written* at the end of the revelation (and it cheers my heart to read it, for other's sake as well as for my own), "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."

"Surely I come quickly. Amen."

"Even so, come Lord Jesus.."

G. V. W.

(Extracted by permission of the Editor, from the "*Present Testimony*." )

There is no equality in an alliance between truth and error ; since by this very alliance, truth ceases to be truth, and error does not thereby become truth. The only thing lost is the authority and obligation of the truth.

## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, AS PRESENTED IN THE PARABLES IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

No. 2.

*(Continued from page 99.)*

ANOTHER thing comes out in the 8th chapter, through the healing of the centurion's servant, that the children of the kingdom would be cast out, and many come from the east and the west to sit with Abraham, &c., in the kingdom. The door is seen to open prospectively to the Gentiles, who are here called the "many," in contrast with the born Jews, who are called the children of the kingdom. This confirms what we saw in the sermon on the mount, that no longer would the heirs of the kingdom be co-extensive with the nation, which was the case before and was so understood by the Jews. Now the kingdom is put morally, and so while there are Jewish children excluded, there are Gentile strangers admitted. The centurion's faith gave the occasion for this farther development of the new form which the kingdom would assume. And now for the first time the Lord takes the title of "Son of Man." The limits of the old sheep-fold are broken down. The Jew having proved himself unworthy, a free entrance is administered to the Gentile. But the suffering condition which was now to be the lot of those who followed Christ again comes in view, and now as a fact. For the Son of Man has not where to lay His head, worse off than the foxes and the birds. He was a houseless wanderer! What a position for the King of Glory! What grace to submit to it! What an effort of the mind to realise it, if indeed we can at all. He who is now the centre of the joys of heaven, and the object of the adoration above, was once a poor rejected and scorned man upon the earth!

Under the title of Son of Man, Jesus forgives sins. And now the hatred of the Pharisees break out. "This man blasphemeth." Devils had just before confessed him to be the "Son of God"—a testimony outside the kingdom, but which showed the dignity of His person.

And the Holy Ghost has grouped them together, than which nothing can more show, on the one hand the grace of the Son of God, and on the other, the exceeding wickedness of man. Man taking advantage of the grace of God to revile His Son!

Another feature of the kingdom is brought out in Matthew's call; the principle of election is seen. A despised and hated publican is called, and there is the grace that always accompanies election, for Matthew immediately follows him. Others had been called before, but rather as the sub-administrators of the kingdom. Peter and the others were to be fishers of men. It was Messiah that called them. It is the Son of Man who calls Matthew.

While the kingdom as originally presented (*vide* iii. and iv. ch.) is receding, Jesus is advancing in the path of grace, and demonstrating with increasing power who and what He is. He raises the dead, mark, after he had laid aside the title of Messiah and taken that of Son of Man. Yet even now if faith recognises His title as Son of David there is an immediate response. The blind men cry to Him, and He opens their eyes. Blessed Jesus, now as then, faith triumphs over all difficulties, is not limited by circumstances. Thou permittest nothing to come between faith and Thee!

In the 10th chapter we have the third distinct call to the nation. The leaders had openly expressed their hatred, but the people had not yet cried out, "Away with Him!" The twelve are sent out to preach that the kingdom was nigh. Wondrous patience and perseverance of love. Even then, if they would have received Jesus, the kingdom would have come.

John the baptist cried "Repent." Jesus also preached repentance. Now the test is confession of the name of Jesus, as the (partially at least) rejected One. Those who confessed Him, He would confess; those who denied, He would deny. The Lord warns the twelve that this message, like the two former, would be rejected. "Behold I send you forth as sheep among wolves." As if He had said—"I know they will not receive you. You go to announce the reign of peace, but they will refuse me; and therefore as the necessary consequence, I have not come to send peace, but a sword. Families will manifest the most intense hatred among themselves, the closest ties will go for nothing. Paternal, filial, and brotherly affections cannot stand the test. The confession of my name will violently break assunder the dearest earthly connections, and he alone is worthy of me to whom father, mother, son or daughter, wife, yea life itself count as nothing. But they who prefer me to life itself shall find it." And such is the estimate in which the Lord holds His messengers, that

they who received them received Him. But persecution was sure to be met with. They had called the Master Beelzebub; the servants must expect the same treatment. But they must not be afraid. There was but one whom they must fear; Him who could cast body and soul into hell. Yet they were precious to Him. The hairs of their head were numbered, and the loss of one hair through the enmity of those to whom they were sent; would be noted and judged by Him.

Mark also, they were sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles, The message is not (I think) on purely Messianic ground. But even as Son of Man, *i.e.*, on ground where He could receive Gentile as well as Jew, the message must go forth first, and exclusively to the Jews. So it was after the resurrection, when the whole work was accomplished, Peter preached the times of refreshing. The Jew is always foremost in the eye of God; he was foremost in rejecting Christ, he will be foremost in blessing by and bye.

Remark also a specific difference between the gospel of the kingdom, and the gospel of the grace of God. *This*, is to the unworthy as our hearts feel, and grateful praise proclaim; *that*, is to the worthy (*i.e.*, those who were so at that time), and if any were unworthy, "let your peace return to you." They would be refused admission into the kingdom.

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## THE CONQUEROR.

THE Lord God, of old, entered on His rest, or Sabbath, as Creator. He had ended His work, and on the seventh day He rested. We know that this Sabbath has been lost by man, and the rest of God disturbed. We know also that another rest, or the keeping of a Sabbath, is in prospect. In what character, we may ask, will it be entered?

Scripture tells us, by a Conqueror. (See Ps. xlvii.—xlviii., xcii—c.; Rev. xix.) These Psalms, &c., intimate that the Lord had just displayed Himself as a Man of war, stilling the noise of waves or the madness of the people, and was now keeping the Sabbath of a Conqueror, or enjoying a *triumphant* rest.

David making way for Solomon is the type of this.



Solomon was the *Peaceful*—a name which implies not abstract rest, but rest after *conflict*.

In such a dignity the Lord enters His second rest, or Sabbath. The first had not been the rest of the Peaceful. It was the rest simply of the Creator—of One who had ended a work. It was not a *triumphant* rest. It was not a rest that bespoke previous glorious warfare. It could not have had the presence of a Conqueror to adorn and gladden it.

But still more. Heaven has anticipated this joy and this ornament; for it has already received a Conqueror. Jesus is there in this character, though never till He ascended had heaven known such a character. The Lord God had filled the heavens, and the angels that excel in strength had attended. Some may have been cast down who kept not their first estate, and others have sung together, as when the earth's foundations were laid. But never, we may say, had a Conqueror been there till Jesus ascended. But He, through death, had destroyed him that had the power of death. (Heb. ii. 14.) He had led captivity captive. (Eph. iv. 8.) He had made a show of principalities. (Col. ii. 15.) After the type of Samson, He had borne the hostile gates to the top of the hill. He had overcome ere He sat down on the Father's throne. (Rev. iii. 21). The grave-clothes had been left in the empty sepulchre. (John xx. 6, 7). As *Conqueror*, therefore, Jesus ascended. Heaven had already known the Living God, but now it had to know the Living God in victory. The Lord returned us in triumph, and filled heaven with a new song, "The Conqueror's Song." And in spirit this song is sung every day by all the saints now gathering.

And we enter heaven and the Kingdom as conquerors also. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit on my throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on His throne! (Rev. xx. 21). We rise as shouting, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is *thy* victory?—thanks be to God who giveth *us* the victory?" (1 Cor. xv. 55). This is the language of conquerors, as the rising ascending saints will be, in their day and way and measure—as their ascending Lord has already been in His day and way and measureless glory.

It is the Kingdom of *Conquerors* that is to be thus displayed and established; and it will be therefore an *irreversible* Kingdom. Unlike the Garden of Eden; for Adam entered it in

order to be assayed—that the Serpent might try a question with him, and put creature integrity to the proof. The Kingdom is to be entered and taken by conquerors—by those who *have been proved*, and not who *are to be proved*.

And the earthly places will be of the same character ; for Israel will already have been proved, and refined, and brought forth, and stablished in the faith of the victory of Christ ; they will have been already made His “goodly horse” and “weapons of war.”

This is, indeed “a new song,” the Conqueror’s song ; and heaven and earth will witness and celebrate it ; their *history must have taught it to them*.

The old song, like the old work, was not a Conqueror’s. The Morning Stars sang over the work of Creation ; but that work was not, as I have said, a Conqueror’s work. It was not victory, but creation. It was not glorious peace after warfare, like Solomon’s, but simply rest and refreshing after labour. And therefore the song of the Morning Stars—the old song—was according that, simple joy over the grand foundations of the earth being laid. But the song which ushers in the Kingdom will be that of Conquerors, and thus new in its strain and burthen. The first “corner-stone” was simply “laid” down by a Creator (Job xxviii. 6, 7), and angels sang : the second “corner-stone” shall be brought in as Victor, and Israel shall shout ! (Ps. cxviii.)—J. G. B.

## THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

THE passage in 2 Cor. v. has been one of much consideration. . . . I do not doubt the saints will be the subjects of that judgment-seat. They will be manifested before it ; but that their *persons* will be called in question, that could not be. They are justified. They rise, not to judgment, but to life ; so that the question of their *persons*, *i.e.*, of themselves, is settled.

But in happy family order the discovery of wrong tempers or hidden breaches is a most welcome process. Far better to have such things *manifested* than *smothered*. The discovery or confession of them is the best kind of healing.

All work of this kind should be conducted and concluded by the light of the Spirit in us ; but, by reason of flesh, this

is not so. This process is hindered and left imperfect; but the light of the judgment-seat of Christ will not be so hindered. There will be no *flesh* to contend with it as a rival energy: it will *manifest* all; and that light and that operation will be a needed work to make the saints happy in their social eternity.

But observe this, as was once remarked, the thought of this judgment-seat gives the apostle no *uneasiness* about *himself*: it rather makes him think of others; for he says, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we *persuade men*. This is a very happy thought. He was not disturbed about himself when he thought about judgment.

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. If the church is only a delivered body it is weak; it must be a delivering one to be a preserved one, because that is the power of God's presence in Christ. Mark the humblest assembly of saints, or an individual Christian; if there is not energy of positive testimony, which acts on others, there is decline.

Adam's sin was in trying to be like God (Gen. iii. 5); our goodness as Christians is in desiring to be like Him. (Eph. iv. 32; v. 1, 2; Phil. i. 21; ii. 5, &c.)

Unbelief can always find excuses, and excuses too that are apparently well founded; they have only this capital defect, that they leave God out.

In the translation of Elijah the lineaments of the ascension of Christ appear. The ascension of Him who, not rapt in a chariot of fire, nor needing a cleansing of that fiery rapture, nor requiring a commissioned chariot to bear Him up, did, in the far sublimer calmness of His own indwelling power, rise from the earth, and with His human body pass into the heavenly places.

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Q.—"O.M.A.B.," Boyle asks for replies to the following questions:—(1.) Tell me the meaning of Gal. iii. 10. How can it be said of saints, justified sinners by faith in Jesus, even though they should make the law their "rule of life," as they say, that they are under a curse? To be sure, such

practically deny their oneness with Christ in resurrection; they are rendering themselves incapable of living in the power of the risen life, but this does not alter the fact that they are one with Christ—risen, ascended, and seated in the heavenlies, and that God is looking at them as such. How, then, can it be said they are under a curse?

(2.) What class does the apostle speak of in Phil. iii. 18, 19?

A.—(1.) The Apostle, dear friend, is not speaking of the *standing of persons*, but is showing the *effect of the law* upon all who put themselves under it, or are striving to live on that principle in their relationships with God. That they are in fact putting themselves in a place to which the curse of the law applies, and consequently putting themselves under the curse, for the simple reason that they do not fulfil it, and it curses all who fail to do so. If a Christian puts himself under the law he must be consciously only in the position to which it refers; *i.e.*, he must be “in the flesh.” (Rom. vii. 5). Whereas the standing of a Christian is “not in the flesh but in the spirit” (Rom. viii. 9), and, as a matter of course, he is not realising his place as risen with Christ. The law applies to a child of fallen Adam, responsible to God as a sinner, and to *none else*. It pursues its claim upon him as far as the death of Christ. There, the believer, as having died with Christ, disappears from its pursuit, and it can go no further. It has no claim over one who is dead, and has thus eluded the uncompromising grasp of the law, and is now alive in another state, in Christ risen from the dead. So that, if a Christian puts himself under it, in any way, he practically denies the place where Christianity has placed him, and cannot *consciously* be in his true position before God. Of course then he breaks the law—(who ever kept it as alive in that state?)—and it curses, without distinction, all who do so!

This is quite a different thing than if Paul was pronouncing upon the *standing* of a Christian, as God sees him, “in Christ.” Impossible that in *such a position* he could be under a curse; and, were he realising it, he would not put himself back into a position to which the curse of the Law applies. When consciously there, he walks, not in the flesh, but in the spirit; and the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him who does so (Rom. vii. 4), but never by being under it.

(2.) I believe whenever the Apostle writes such solemn words and warnings as these, that he has his mind upon

those who have *professed* the name of Christ, but who, in their worldly fruitless lives, plainly show that it is a mere profession without reality, and are thus the greater enemies to the Cross of Christ—joining to the name of Christ a life which had the things of earth for its object, instead of that which filled the soul of Paul, *i.e.*, a Christ in heavenly glory, who had been *rejected* by the world.

Doubtless the end of such would be *utter* "destruction," not merely the "destruction of the flesh," of 1 Cor. v. 5, to which you allude. Such solemn words as these, while searching to all consciences, have in view the mere lifeless professor in the outward universal Church, and are never used to stumble the true believer, or to throw the faintest shadow of a doubt on the certitude of his perfect, eternal, unalterable security in Christ. But when the walk is careless and disobedient, and one sees that souls are satisfied with the knowledge of grace, without seeking to grow up to Christ in all things, it is blessed to have such solemn words to search the conscience deeply, and provoke the Christian to make his calling and election sure, by adding to his faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (see 2 Pet. i. 5-11), and walking suitably to his high and holy calling. I am daily more deeply impressed—may the impression be deeply engraved upon the hearts of both writer and reader—that in our walk as Christians we should strain every nerve in practical Christianity and obedience to the Lord, as though our soul's salvation depended entirely upon ourselves; and yet with the perfect consciousness, at the same time, that it does not depend on ourselves at all. This is so important in a day of much knowledge of the full free grace of the Gospel, and much high-sounding profession, and alas! but little thorough reality, or true-hearted devotedness to Christ. A *yielding of ourselves* to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God! and a bringing of every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ!

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Scripture makes a much simpler thing of the putting away of sins than our religion makes of it. Scripture puts it at the outset; human religion makes it the great attainment. Scripture puts it in company with the blood of Christ, and it disappears.

**"FOR EVER WITH THE LORD."**

How sweet the hope of seeing  
Thee, Jesus, face to face ;  
And sweet the thought of being  
In yonder heavenly place,

This hope lights up the pathway,  
Though wearily we roam,  
That soon, beyond the desert,  
We'll be with Thee at home.

Ah ! deep indeed the longing  
Which often we express :  
And deeper still the throbbings  
Our anxious hearts which press.

But oh ! *Thy heart*, Lord Jesus,  
With deeper longings press'd,  
Would have us in the glory,  
With Thee for ever blest.

Though bright the expectation  
Of that soon coming day,  
The brighter realization  
Shall make Hope fade away.

Then gazing on Thy beauty,  
And listening to Thy voice,  
There, hearts so often heavy  
For ever will rejoice !

For oh ! the happy moment  
When we shall hear Thee say—  
"Rise up, my love, my fair one,  
Rise up and come away."

How then shall all our voices  
Contribute to Thy praise,  
And swell the heavenly music  
Which ransomed hearts shall raise.

Oh ! yes, the Hope that cheers us,  
And now appears so bright,  
Will fade as stars of evening  
Before the morning's light.

For then, Lord, we shall see Thee,  
Whom seeing not we love ;  
Then, Lord, we shall be with Thee,  
In glory bright above.

## "IN WHAT CHARACTER DO I KNOW GOD?"

READER, I desire that you should ask yourself the plain but deeply interesting question, which stands at the head of this paper; one of such deep importance to your soul. Ask yourself plainly, "In what character do I think of, or know God?" If you are an unsaved sinner, do you not think of Him as a *Judge*? And that one day or other you will have to stand before Him, and have the question of your sins, and your eternal happiness or misery, finally decided upon!

How solemn a thought is this for the soul? Well might the inspired Psalmist say, "Enter not into Judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxliii. 2.) Yes, dear reader, solemn indeed is the thought, that the moment God and the sinner meet in judgment it *must* result in eternal condemnation to the latter! Hence the solemn cry of the Psalmist, "Enter not into judgment," &c. He knew how it must end. He knew that then—hope would vanish for ever, when a Holy God—as a Judge—and an unjustified sinner, would meet for judgment. No man living shall then be justified!

There is a day spoken of when "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." (Rom. ii. 16.) One with whom the smallest sin of the countless millions of the human race—be it hidden in the secret recesses of the sinner's heart—has never been forgotten. And in the daylight of whose presence the very thoughts of the heart are naked and open—the words "spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light"—then "there is nothing (now) covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known." (Luke xii. 2, 3.) That day is coming when "God shall judge the secrets of men." When God will enter into judgment, His strange act. I ask you, then, my reader, do you only think of Him thus, as a Judge? If so, you need not wait for that day to know the result—He has declared it now—and He cannot speak with plainer, simple words; and those words are, that "no man living shall be justified!"

Read with me the solemn scene when that day comes, as we find it in Rev. xx. 11-15. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was

opened which was the book of life; and the dead *were judged* out of those things which were written in the books *according to their works*. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and *they were judged every man according to their works*. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire!" Appalling scene! when God shall judge the secrets of men! Oh! fellow-sinner, are you thinking of God, and of meeting God, thus? Would that I could impress your soul with the solemn result to all who only know Him thus, as a Judge. Would that your heart—finding itself without resource—would cry out of its depths, "I know it is so of a truth; and how can a man be just before God?" (Job ix. 2, margin.) "How then can a man be justified with God?" (Job xxv. 4.) How am I to know Him—in what character would you have me know Him? if the result is this, for all who must meet Him as a Judge!

Well, my reader, I would desire to introduce you to Him, while revealing Himself in *another character altogether*! He has not yet entered upon His work of judgment—His strange work. He is not now judging the secrets of men—He is not now bringing every work into judgment, as He yet will do, of those who must meet Him as a Judge. But He is revealing Himself to the poor, guilty, sin-laden souls of men in quite another character—under one in which I desire that you should know Him, my reader—and knowing Him, that you should fall before Him with a worshipping, adoring heart to praise His gracious love to your soul, in revealing Himself thus to you. That character is, a JUSTIFIER!! One who is now, in this day of grace, "justifying the ungodly." (Rom. iv. 5.) How different is the thought, dear sinner, to think of "*God my justifier*;" instead of "*God my judge*." How precious to know Him thus: as a poor ungodly sinner heretofore cowering before God as an angry Judge, as perhaps you think; from whose presence you might well desire to flee away. To know him now with a relieved and thankful heart, as a justifying God—a Saviour!

Well, you say, surely He must have good grounds to act towards me, a poor ungodly sinner, in such a way as this. I declare to you, dear reader, that *He has* good grounds to do so. Let us turn to Romans iii., and see what these grounds



are. We read in v. 19, after the sad and wretched tale of sin, which the Scriptures pronounced upon the Jew, (v. 10-18.) He tells us that God has stopped every mouth, bringing in the world under judgment before God. How plain this is; and so gracious in the Lord to tell us so, that we may know it now—that He Himself has closed *every* mouth—not leaving us one word wherewith to answer Him—*your* mouth is *closed*, my reader, and so is *mine*; and we may take the sentence home to ourselves as our own.

But oh, what a wondrously blessed thing to discover, that the moment a sinner's lips have been closed by the hand of God, and that he stands self-condemned before Him, that God reveals Himself *as a Justifier*, on the ground of the precious sacrifice and blood-shedding of Christ! Precious to find, too, that God is righteous in this. To think that we are saved not only by a God of mercy, but a God of righteousness. That He is acting in full keeping with His own righteousness in doing so. Hence the gospel is called "the righteousness of God." (See chapter i. 16, 17; iii. 21-26.) What, then, is the ground on which God acts as a "just God and a Saviour"—"just and the justifier," of him who believes! It is this, that He has made Christ on His Cross a "Mercy Seat," where Jesus' blood speaks such a tale of mercy to the poor sinner—and righteousness against his sin—where God and the poor sinner can meet—the one, a poor, lost, self-condemned sinner; the other a just God, and the justifier of him who believes, (v. 26.) And oh, what a word do we find in (v. 24.)—worthy of that God from whom it came. "Being justified *freely* by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "Freely," fully, eternally justified; with no grudging, unwilling hand. It reminds us of the style of the Shepherd with the lost sheep in Luke xv.; when He found it, He laid it on His shoulders "*rejoicing!*" Or, of the Creditor with his two debtors, in Luke vii., when they had *nothing to pay*, he "*frankly*" forgave them both! Worthy of God are those precious words, "*Freely*"—" "*Frankly*" and "*Rejoicing!*" And then when we think of the pricelessness of the Blood of the spotless victim which was shed; and also of the personal excellence of Him who is that "mercy seat," we can in some measure comprehend the ground of God's acting towards us as a Justifier. His heart set free, as it were, to display itself in all the blessedness of redeeming, justifying love!

Dear reader, do you know God in this character? Are you repeating over, and over, and over again, "yes, I know Him now; I thought I would have to meet Him as a *Judge*, but now I know Him as a *Justifier*!"—"God *my* Justifier?" Have you owned His righteous sentence against you? Has your mouth been closed, without one word to answer Him? If so, you know Him at this moment as *your own personal* Justifier! What a relief to the poor sin-laden soul.—And knowing Him thus, you will never have to know Him as a Judge. The question has been settled—the sentence pronounced—you are "justified freely by His grace."—And what He does, He does *for ever*! You may well say then, "It is God that justifieth, who is He that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) And again, "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be *for ever*; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it that man should fear before Him." (Eccles. iii. 14.)

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## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, AS PRESENTED IN THE PARABLES IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

No. 3.

(Continued from page 116.)

As we pass rapidly through these chapters we meet with a remarkable statement, which places the dispensational rank, or standing of the kingdom in its present condition, above that which preceded it,—“That the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist,” who was greater than any who had preceded him.

Clearly this is due to the dispensation, and not to any personal quality. Such an one as Paul may be a more honoured servant than John the Baptist, but we have only to look at our feeble selves to know that we are only greater than he on account of the superior character of the dispensation in which, through God's grace and favour, we are. No doubt our privileges as members of the church of God were present to the eye of the Lord; beyond all doubt the saint who is in the church a member of the body of Christ, the church which is His bride, is characteristically distinct from any other saint. It is not merely a greater and a higher

position, which it surely is, but we repeat *characteristically distinct* in privilege here and in glory hereafter. Still it is not the church that is here spoken of, it is the kingdom of heaven; and in spite of the oppression which now would be the portion of the heirs of the kingdom, nay, it may be in part because of this very suffering now, through association with the King, the little one in the kingdom is greater than John the Baptist. But the great thing is, that all the saints before the kingdom rested on *promise*, we who are in the kingdom rest upon *accomplishment*. Not one of them could say "my sins ARE blotted out," but we can say, "In whom we HAVE redemption, even the *forgiveness of sins*." The least then in the kingdom of heaven, possesses privileges which none could have had before. For now with joy we sing, "The atoning work is done."

Some have said that the "least" was Jesus Himself, (meaning of course when He was in humiliation and going to the cross). The soul that knows ever so little of the work and person of Jesus shrinks from such a thought. Neither would we say Jesus was the greatest in the kingdom. He is beyond comparison. And even to call Him greatest as compared with others in the kingdom, is derogatory to His true honour and glory. He is the King.

In comparing the 11th ver. of xi. chap. with 19th ver. of v. chap., it does not appear that the same character is in view. In v. chap. the warning that, unless their righteousness exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they would in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven; the least in the kingdom seems to be viewed in the same category as the Scribes and Pharisees.

Now, their crying sin was the setting aside of the commandments of God, making them of no effect through their tradition, and teaching men so. This was so wicked that He who did it in the least commandment would be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, *i.e.*, although within the limits of the kingdom, (for the idea of space is always contained in that of the kingdom of heaven, not necessarily in that of the kingdom of God), as it now is, he would be like the Scribes and Pharisees, and should not enter therein by and bye, when the present mysterious form had passed away, and the power and the glory were come.

In the xi. chap. it is different; it is evidently the privilege of the little one *in* the kingdom. John, although individually

high and honoured, would yet be less than the one who in the kingdom was less than all others there. It had now assumed a heavenly aspect in contrast with the earth. Its blessings, for the time being, were rather heavenly than earthly, and those truly belonging to it were the children of their Father in Heaven, (still not the Church).

This was not, and could not be known before the kingdom had, through the rejection of Jesus, the King, assumed its present form. Now, John was at the very time passing away; his testimony had been given; his work done; himself in prison, out of which he never came, and therefore he could not be said to be in it.

But the expression in the v. chap. is not the same as that in xi. chap. Here it is *μικρότερος*, the one who, on comparison, is found to be *less* than another, or less than all others, and therefore may be called the least. The word implies necessarily the existence of others, and expresses the result of a comparison.

In v. chap. it is *ελάχιστος*, and there may, or may not be, implied comparison. It may be used absolutely, and have the sense of a very little one where there are no others.

Hence a different expression, and a totally different connection, lead to the conclusion that a different character is in view.

But judgment is now pronounced upon the generation. They are like children in the market, and calling to their fellows, "We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced; we have sung dirges unto you, and ye have not wailed." There had been no response to the preaching of John, nor to the Lord's. They would be given up. Special judgment upon those to whom special privilege had been granted without avail. It would be more tolerable for Sodom than for them.

The Lord feels His rejection. A dull stupid indifference on the part of the multitude, active and energetic hatred on the part of the leaders. And now that the awful truth is becoming manifest, Jesus turns to His Father and says, "I thank thee, &c., &c." What a word in the midst of His sorrow! What a lesson for us in the midst of our sorrow and the world's rejection of us! Not mere submission, but happy acquiescence in the counsels of the Father, from which he turns in the fulness of His love and grace, yes in the plenitude of His Divine power too, although in appearance but a

man. He turns to the labouring and heavy laden, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." After all, in Him alone they would find rest. So the cast-out follower of the rejected Jesus may now turn away from his sorrows here, to his heavenly Father, and come refreshed and strengthened by his communion with the Father, with the words of love and grace to the poor lost world around him. The Father's presence—that's the way to rise above our trial, and to get power to preach Jesus to sinners.

*(To be continued, Lord willing.)*

## THE SALVATION OF GOD.

THE salvation of God may surely be traced all through Scripture, from the earliest, simplest revelation of it, in the opening of Genesis, to the celebration of it in realms of glory at the close of the Apocalypse.

It came with the first utterance of God in the hearing of this sin-stricken world. The promise of the seed of the woman conveyed it. It was illustrated in patriarchal stories all through Genesis. It was presented a thousand shadows or symbols in the ordinances of the law. It was echoed in a thousand voices of the prophets. And thus the current of it may be traced all through the ages of the Old Testament, and the line of light that was revealing it then may be seen as spanning, or stretching across the whole old volume.

In due time, in the fulness of time, the New Testament age begins; and then at the very outset, the salvation of God appears again. It becomes embodied. The child that was to be born, the Son that was to be given, was named of God "Jesus." If the first divine utterance in the Old Testament bore it upon it, so does the like first divine utterance in the New, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. The salvation of God was, as I may again say, now embodied. It entered its human temple, to dwell there for ever; from thence to be unveiled: and thereby and therein to accomplish all eternal purposes of grace. (Matt. i.)

Not only, however, was salvation thus embodied, but its arrival here was celebrated by the extatic joy of heaven, and the full earnest-hearted welcome of the earth. Angelic hosts

in the light and presence of the glory, and angels in their individuality, tell us of this joy; and vessels anointed by the Holy Ghost proclaim this welcome. Mary rehearses it, and so does Zacharias, and so Simeon and Anna; and the shepherds in the fields, and the babe in the womb, wait in their several way to greet it and rejoice. (Luke i., ii.)

When thus arrived, it is active. What had been ushered forth in the midst of such congratulations, could not but stir itself, and be at its work under its high commission; and this is the life, the ministerial activity of the Lord Jesus. He was dispensing health and salvation all around Him. Every sickness and every disease among the people, had to tell that "*Jehovah-ropi*" was here, Christ the healer; the salvation of God was abroad, dispensing itself to the need of a ruined, death-stricken world, in every form of its misery.

Being thus announced and arrived, and having thus dispensed itself in the ministry of Jesus, as we read in the Evangelists; it is now the subject of preaching in the Acts of the Apostles. The Jews hear of it first, and then the Gentiles. Peter calls on the Jew to come to it, and goes to the house of the Gentile with "words" that convey it. (Chaps. ii., ix.) Paul preaches it to the nation of his kindred in the flesh, and then to the ends of the earth, on the authority of God by His prophet. (Chap. xiii.) And when at the very end he leaves Israel in unbelief, under sentence of blindness of eye, and hardness of heart, he lets them know, that it, "the salvation of God," is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they would hear it. (Chap. xxviii.) It is as fresh in that day of Acts xxviii., as it was when first announced in Gen. iii. The Spirit of God was as full of it then, as the mouth of the Lord was when He uttered his earliest word in a world where sin had entered.

There is no moment, in the story of the world, to be compared with that which witnessed the arrival of it from heaven to earth, as we have seen, heaven in its hosts, and its glory was rejoicing then; and earth in its anointed vessels, great and small, was answering it.

And throughout this lengthened story, we may see, that the sinner may possess himself with this salvation, taking it *immediately* from God, without debtorship to any other. Adam took it from the lips of God, and made it his own at once. It entered the house of Zaccheus, and came there simply and solely *in company with Jesus*. It is faith that

gets it; and faith is the individual act of the soul, the sinner's exercise of heart and conscience entirely with God alone. Old Simeon illustrates this. He took the child in his arms, as God's salvation, without asking leave of its mother, for faith knows it to be God's gift to the sinner, as the sinner; and knows that it is our necessities as sinners that constitutes our fitness and our title for it and to it.

From that day surely, to say no more, from the day of Acts xxviii, "The salvation of God" has come forth to this wide wide world under divine commission. It has been sealed with the broadest seal—the clear and deep stamp of heaven, or of God, has been put upon it; and no one speaks from God, under commission and authority from him, who does not publish it. "The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles."

The Epistles, in their season, teach it to those who have received it as preached to them. They teach it in its glories. They distinguish it in its present and future relation to us. We have now "the salvation of the soul;" we wait for that "salvation which is to be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i.) We have now "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." We wait for that form of it which the second coming of the Lord shall bring with it. (Tit. ii. 11-14; Heb. ix. 28.)

And then when we pass the Epistles, and reach the end, the very end of the divine book, and read the Apocalypse, there we find that this salvation is celebrated—not preached nor taught; not as addressing itself to a wide world of sinners, or unfolding itself to the sacred enclosures, and assemblies of the saints, but celebrated, whether in heaven or on earth, in courts of glory, or regions of renewed creation. (Rev. vii., xii., xix.)

And surely then, as I said, I may still say, the salvation of God is tracked all through the word; promised, illustrated, typified, prophesied, embodied, dispensed, preached, taught and celebrated?

But salvation is too great a thought for the heart of man to suggest—or indeed to receive. God must provide us with it—the Spirit must enable us to accept it. *The religious mind* of man resents it as inconsistent with the obligation he owes to God, and with the responsibility under which he lies to Him. *The moral sense* resents it as being no security of practical life and righteousness. How deeply at fault

**both** are! How unequal is the best human thing to reach the divine! While neither man's religion nor man's morality give toleration to the idea of salvation; God, as we see, is occupied with it from first to last. The promise of it, the history of it, the display of it, the illustration of it in one sinner after another, stretch across the whole volume. God dispenses it now, and would have us enjoy it. He will perfect it in all its glory by and bye, and will call us to celebrate it.

"Jesus" is the imperishable name—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. This is the name which abides in bloom and freshness still, the unfading name which eternity has no power to efface. Time may wear away rocks, eternity will do nothing with that name but celebrate it. "Jesus," or Saviour, was the first word written by the finger of God in the record-book of this world of sin, as we have seen—and it has ever since been kept, like the bow in the cloud, in the vividness of its earliest power. It is the unchanging, unchangeable name. It is not the *unutterable* name, it is true; but it is the *imperishable* one. We have heard that the Jew, under the law, found the divine name to be too nigh, too distant, too sacred, for human lips to use. But the sinner, under grace, talks now of the divine name all the day long, and will for ever.

When God spake in law, He satisfied Himself to speak in a sequestered nook of the earth, and in the hearing of the smallest of all the nations of the earth; but when He came to speak of salvation, He summoned the wide, wide world to listen!

Great and glorious as it is, it rests on the simplest foundation which God has found in the sacrifice of the cross. This I have assumed throughout. God is satisfied in Christ, the believing sinner is saved! God has found his satisfaction in Jesus. I have found my salvation in God? Call our good thing by what name we may,—justification, acceptance in the beloved, sonship, peace, glory, redemption, reconciliation, or whatever other name that good thing may carry, all rests on this, that Christ has satisfied God in that which He has done for sinners. The rent vail, the empty sepulchre, the resurrection and the ascension, the glory of the Purger of our sins in heaven, and the mission of the Spirit upon that to earth, testify, in the mouth of the most august witnesses, this satisfaction of which we speak. None can gainsay such



witnesses on the side of the accuser! none can exceed them in dignity and triumph on the side of God! Himself our Justifier, we are to accept salvation from God, just because He has accepted satisfaction from Christ—to accept it with all thankful, worshipping assurance.

If God have rent the veil, it is obedience in the sinner to enter. When I lay my burthen on God's foundations, I am glorifying as well as using them.

Salvation is to be enjoyed *by faith*. As we read, "the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it." "Faith comes by hearing." We cannot get it by working. We dare not count upon deserving. It is *God's* salvation, "prepared," as we read, by Him. (Luke ii. 28-32). Counselling, brought out, revealed by Himself, and sent out into the world by Him. We have had to gaze and to listen—to be debtors to the provisions of grace for the most ruined, miserable, degraded condition in which the creature could find itself!

J. G. B.

## EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

JOHN XX.

THE characteristics of John xx. have just struck me. In the 1st verse it is Mary *alone* that is shown to us on going to the sepulchre. This is characteristic; for the whole Gospel so much presents *individual souls* to our notice, and the action of God upon them personally. And then in Mary also you see the working of *affection*, according to John; the individual brought alone to Christ, and finding in Christ an object to satisfy. Then the new *life* is imparted, *carrying with it the remission of sins*; because imparted by Him who is raised out of that death that has put it all away for you. This is also characteristic of John. These are just resurrection scenes, different from what the other Evangelists give you which, however, in their turn are equally characteristic.

## THE PROMISE OF A REST.

HEBREWS IV.

It is a blessed, cheering thought to the Christian, amidst the turmoil and bustle and confusion of life, that there is a "rest"—an eternal rest before him; that there *remaineth* a

rest for the keeping of a Sabbath, (which is a similar thought) to the people of God! It cheered the heart, and lightened the step of Caleb, while he was suffering for the unfaithfulness of his brethren, and was obliged to turn back from the borders of his rest of an *earthly* Canaan (Num. xiv.); and to wander for forty years in the wilderness; it cheered his heart to know, that come what would, of vicissitude and trial by the way, his rest was sure; that Canaan, whose bunches of first-ripe grapes he had tasted, and whose land of hills and valleys he had traversed for forty days (Num. xiii.) lay before him, and when the toil and labour of the wilderness were over, he would enter in to his rest, and enjoy what his soul longed for, during his forty years' pilgrimage! (Jos. xiv.)

It cheered the heart of Paul, whose soul had been feasted for a moment on the delights of his *heavenly* Canaan, when he was caught up to the third heaven, and heard "unspeakable words" (2 Cor. xii.), it cheered his heart to know that beyond the service, and toils, and trials, and self-denials of his wilderness journey, lay that "rest which remaineth to the people of God"—a rest which was God's! And it is a cheering prospect to the believer now to have this "promise of entering into God's rest" before him, when the labour and trial, and toil, and wilderness circumstances, shall have been a by-gone thing. When God himself shall have ceased to be "a worker," which our sin has made Him!

You see, my reader, that it is the "*promise of rest*" which is "*left us*" in this chapter; not a rest which has *already come*, and of which we are in possession now. And the *believer*; (that is, one who already possesses rest of conscience, because of the finished work of Christ); is spoken of as labouring onward to this *rest of God*. "We which *have believed*, do enter into rest;" the believer has not yet entered into it; it still remains a future thing. Paul had just been speaking (chap. iii.), of Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; and the thought arises in his mind of the analogous position of Israel under the leadership of Moses and Aaron—the one, God's messenger or apostle, and the other His high priest in the journey through the wilderness, onward to their Canaan of rest. All of which formed such a marked and impressive figure of those under the "*Heavenly calling*" who had professed the name of Christ, and were going onward, as it were through their wilderness course, under Him, as a "Son over his own house;" from the cross, to the rest

which remains to the people of God. And we are warranted in seeking instruction from these things, used as warnings and motives, and grounds for exhortation to ourselves; "All these things happened to them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Cor. x. 11.)

What care and love it reveals on the Lord's part, to give these solemn warnings and pleadings against the "unbelief and sin" of nature and flesh; to those who have professed the name of Christ, lest the "unbelief and sin" which caused many a child of Israel to fall in the wilderness way, and never attain to his earthly Canaan, should also prevent them from entering into the heavenly! Mark this, he *never raises the shadow of a doubt of the true believer finally attaining to it*. He says, "We which *have* believed, *do* enter into rest." It is as sure to the believer as if he was there even now. But he presses it upon all our hearts who have *professed* His name, "Let us therefore fear, lest a *promise* being left us of entering into His (God's) rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Ch. iv. 1.)

Now what is "seeming to come short?" It is forgetting that we are not redeemed for that rest of God, and sinking down to the ways of the world around us. It is making a settlement as it were, in a world in which we should be but "strangers and pilgrims" and having "no certain dwelling place." It is practically looking back, and longing after the "flesh-pots of Egypt;" and forgetting our "heavenly calling." It is opening the door of our heart to the inroads of "unbelief," and thus practically "departing from the living God:"—and putting ourselves in the way of being "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." I speak to you who have *professed* the name of Christ; to your true state before God I don't address myself. And I ask you, is there anything in your ways, which you practically deny your heavenly calling, which professes that you are hastening onward through a defiled world which is *not* your rest? Are you clinging to the money-loving, self-advancing, self-seeking plans and projects of this present evil world? Or have you heard a voice in your inmost soul, saying, "Arise, ye, and depart; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted?" Are the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, and the vanities of the world filling your heart, so that in your practical ways, you are "seeming to come short" of your profession? You have heard the glad tidings of a *Heavenly*

rest, as Israel heard of the glad tidings of an *Earthly* rest, from the lips of the spies, whom they sent to spy out the land. (Num. xiii.) Has the word in your ears been like that which sounded in theirs—a profitless word, because it was not “*mixed with faith* in them which heard it?” (ch iv. 2.) Or are you treasuring in you heart the thought of this rest of God and counting “all things but dross and dung” which would hinder you by the way? Oh! the world, the world, how it clings to the ways, and thoughts, and desires, and associations of those who made the fairest profession; giving nothing tangible to show to the beholder, that their citizenship is indeed in heaven! And thus they “*seem* to come short of it.” And oh, I may again say, self, self, self, how it deforms and defiles those who wear the name of Christian—of Christ! Of one in whom self was surrendered, and set aside, and denied, and unseen; while the only perfect self, which ever walked through a world of sin!

Verses 3, 4.—“But surely,” some might say, “God rested in creation when He had finished His work (Gen. ii. 2, 3); and how is it that “God’s rest” seems to be spoken of here as yet to come?” Surely, I reply, God rested from all His works which he had created and made; but his creature, man, did not enter into his rest with Him. Nor did He Himself enjoy it long. *Sin* came into His rest and broke it up (Gen. iii.), and so instead of resting where sin was, God became again a “Worker” to put it away! And man became a toiler and a worker in a world which was defiled by sin. His sentence was, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” And of the Lord God we read, “The Lord God did *make* coats of skins and clothed the man and his wife.” (Gen. iii. 19-21.) Or as the Lord Jesus expresses it in Jno. v. 17, “My Father *worketh* hitherto, and I *work*.” The Father (God’s name in grace) had become a worker when sin had came in; and the Son was a worker, and the Holy Ghost is a worker; because God cannot rest where there is sin.

Verses 7, 8.—But surely again, some might say, the Jew rested when he went into the land of Canaan and possessed it under Joshua (margin). Surely this was the “rest” which then had been attained. How every difficulty has been anticipated in this beautiful scripture. No, says the Spirit, this was not the “rest,” for if it were, “David would not (centuries) afterward have spoken of another day,” saying, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as

in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, providence, and saw my work forty years . . . . So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into *my rest*."

"THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD!" For, says the Apostle, if a man had entered into it, he would not be labouring—he would have ceased from his works, as God had done in creation for the moment, from His own. "Let us *labour*, or use all diligence, therefore, to enter into that rest, (God's) lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." The believer labours onward through the wilderness in the full consciousness of the grace in which he stands. His very position as a believer has constituted him a "worker," as his position as a sinner had excluded such a thought; for salvation is "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly." (Rom. iv. 5.) The Christian's work, is a "work of faith," and his labour a "labour of love." (1 Thes. i. 3.)

And now we have the wonderful provision God has made to *prevent* such an issue as that which happened to unbelieving Israel—that of falling by the way.

The first is "HIS WORD?" Quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Ch. iv. 12, 13.)

And have you not found it so, my reader, betimes? His word, as His eye, looking down into your heart, discerning its secret motives, and designs, and plans, and hopes, and fears? Has it not often detected a thought which had not emanated from Him; or an intent which had not its aim to His glory? Have you not often shrunk from His eye, as His word is termed, knowing well that the thoughts of your heart, and the purposes lurking there, could not meet His Holy scrutiny? But have you ever thought, too, that it was His mercy that has provided such a searcher of your heart—His provision to prevent an issue to you, as that to unbelieving Israel of old! And have you not often slighted His warning, and despised His guidance, because it did not fall in with your present purposes and plans, and arrangements, and perhaps your religious thoughts too?

But you might say too, *I have felt the power of His word; I have gazed down into it, and been perfectly miserable at the contemplation of "self," laid bare under its searching gaze.* Well, my reader, if you have, you have only been experiencing the gracious care of God for your soul, that you might be able to detect every working of unbelief, and every movement of flesh, and self, which would tend to make you fall by the way. And if so, you have now only to learn God's *Second* gracious provision to meet what His word exposes in your soul.

THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST! When the word lays bare the conscience before its piercing gaze, as the eye of God; we might well be miserable without this second provision for our need. We might be inclined to let go our profession altogether, so disheartened with the fresh and daily discovery of ourselves. No, says the Spirit, "let us hold it fast;" (v. 14)—"seeing we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God."

But I am a poor weak thing here below, you would say; and how can the glorious Son of God feel for me! Well, remember that He too was here below in the wilderness way—He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"—for He was in all points tempted like as we are, apart from sin—of this He knew it not; so that we can come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Thus is our access to God always sure; thus is the heart kept right; and everything that would make us fall by the way detected—and so the issues of the conflict and warfare in the wilderness are sure, and the rest which remains a glorious certainty: and with lightsome heart, and gladdened step, the believer labours onward in his course, with the rest of God in view—his heart cheered when he finds the word detecting everything that would hinder, or make him stumble by the way, and his confidence sustained by the Great High Priest; who had traversed the way Himself; and thus he finally enters into the rest that remains for the people of God!

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## PRESENT REVIVALS.

THIS Work of God is indeed precious. It may take a shape and character little expected. But it is the property of life

to put on at times some exuberant, redundant features, to work itself beyond its ordinary measures. It is more like itself, when it acts thus—for life is a living thing, and has inbred force in it.

We are, however, to judge every expression of it. “He that is spiritual judgeth all things.”

There was revival in the day of Josiah, and Josiah was acting under it for a time, without the Word of God, save what the national knowledge of Jehovah and His ways gave him. His word, the Book of God, was afterwards discovered. He used it. And thus, though he still acted as a freshly awakened man, in the life and vigour of the revival, the Word *regulated* and *directed* his action, and put it now in somewhat of a new force. (2 Chron. xxxiv.)

Many who are acting under the present revival or fresh current of life have, I believe, after this pattern, still to find the Book of God. They are acting under a blessed *awakening* of the Spirit, but need in very much, the *light* and *guidance* of the Word.

## PEACE WITH GOD—THE PEACE OF GOD— THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

I WOULD like to say a word on the different characters of peace mentioned at the heading of this paper.

1. “Peace *with* God” is that which the sinner possesses and enjoys in believing. He is justified by God on the ground of the bloodshedding of Christ, who has “made peace through the blood of his cross.” (Col. i. 20.) Faith lays hold of and believes in an already completed work, which has answered for the sinner, and has satisfied the claims of God; and thus has peace—cloudless, never-ending, unalterable peace. A peace which does not depend upon the enjoyment of its possessor; but upon the work of Christ who made peace by the blood of His cross. A God of judgment went into the entire question of sin to its very depths, with Christ on the cross. A God of peace it was who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. (Heb. xiii. 20.) A risen Christ is our peace in the presence of God. (Eph ii. 14.) Now all this is true for the believer, without his feelings or

his enjoyment of it entering into the matter at all. Apart from all these things, he possesses this unalterable peace with God. It depends, not on his enjoyment of it, but on its reality before God. It was the parting gift of Christ to His people, "Peace I leave with you," "Peace be unto you." (John xiv. 27; xx. 19.) He had made peace by His blood. The God of peace had brought Him again from the dead, and He had nothing but peace to leave them.

2. Now, the "peace of God" means something which God dwells in Himself. It is God's own peace, in which He dwells. The peace of that God whom nothing can change who knows the end from the beginning, and has ordained everything from the beginning to the end; and though man may strive and hinder His purposes for a while, they will all eventually be brought to pass. Can we not for a moment contemplate the perfect, unruffled, conscious peace in which God dwells? And yet this peace is promised; that it shall keep the believer's heart and mind who has committed *all* his anxieties, *all* his cares by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving to God. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. iv. 6.) And what is promised? "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ." God's own peace, in which He dwells, keeps guard over the heart, and the heart rests in the midst of every trial and every difficulty; and the mind is not on the rack of anxiety, but is filled with God's peace, when all has been laid out before Him, and committed to Him.

3. The peace of Christ is another thing. To be sure, Christ is God, but still God's peace and Christ's peace are not the same. Hence the difference in John xiv. 27 between "Peace I leave with you," and "My peace I give unto you." Christ did not need peace WITH God, as we do as sinners. He "knew no sin;" He gives us this through His precious blood. This He did not need for Himself. The spotless Lamb of God "did no sin;" and was "separate from sinners" while amongst them. He "knew no sin." We receive the changeless portion, peace with God through His precious blood. But as a Son with His Father, He passed through the world in the conscious communion of perfect



peace (*my peace*) in every step of His way. His was a life of sorrow here below, but there never was a cloud during His whole pathway between Him and His Father. It was a life of perfect unity of thought and object, as He lived by His Father. “I live by the Father.” (John vi. 57.) There was one solemn moment when the three hours’ darkness and sin-bearing and judgment on the cross shut this out, when He was atoning for our sins. It was but for that moment, for all the rest was unvarying peace. “My peace.” This, then, is the peace of Christ.

The first (peace with God), then, is the portion of the sinner who believes; his unalterable portion.

The second (God’s peace), that which the Christian has when he has unburdened his heart of every care, and committed every thought to Him who knows the end from the beginning.

And the third (Christ’s peace), is what we enjoy when living by Him, even as He enjoyed when living by the Father. “I live *by the Father*; so he that eateth me, even he shall live *by me*.” (John vi. 57.) Communion with Him, and with the Father, who has been revealed in the Son. And more; when we are thus enjoying Christ’s peace, we have the *enjoyment*, too, of ~~that~~ peace with God, which, as saved sinners we *possess* through His work on the cross.

Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Rom. xv. 13.)

## “BECAUSE OF HIS IMPORTUNITY.”

LUKE XI. 8.

WILDER, Father, grows the tempest !  
Darker still, the night comes on ;  
Every earthly hope has vanished !  
Every earthly joy has gone.

I was growing faint and weary,  
Watching, waiting for the day  
To rise, within a loved one,  
'Neath Thy Spirit's quick'ning ray.

But the clouds were growing darker,  
Gathering thicker o'er my soul ;  
For ~~my~~ prayers were still unanswer'd,  
And my loved one not “made whole.”

Then a voice came through the darkness,  
Through the gathering shades of night;  
"Because of his importunity,"  
The Father *rose at night*.

Faith may be weak and wavering,  
Prayer may seem cold and dead;  
Still, "Ask and it shall be given you,"  
Tho' hope has well nigh fled.

Still watch, still wait, still hope, still pray,  
And never slack thy grasp,  
Until the Father pours thee down  
The blessing thou hast ask'd.

Oh! blessed Jesus, 'twas Thy voice  
Came through the thick'ning gloom;  
And strewed those words of comfort o'er  
The pathway to the tomb!

'Twas Thou did'st bid me watch and wait,  
To catch Thy smile of love—  
And bid me "pray and never faint,"  
But fix my eyes above.

And now my heart is cheered—refreshed—  
And prayers again I raise;  
In full assurance, in *Thy time*  
Thou'lt turn my prayer to praise.—A. S. L. O.

## "JONATHAN STRIPPED HIMSELF."

I SAMUEL xviii.

"AND it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. . . . And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." (1 Sam. xviii. 1-4.)

It will be interesting to trace the circumstances which gave rise to these beautiful words, and to seek to learn in some measure from them, as in a figure, how the heart of a sinner is drawn out, in love to the true David, even to Christ. "We love him because he first loved us," is the true order in which, as poor sinners, we learn to know and to love Him, when He makes Himself known to our souls

as the Conquering Victorious Saviour, who had gone to meet our adversary alone; who had returned from His conquest, having "bruised the head" of him who wielded the power of death over us. The soul of a poor sinner is thus knit to Christ, just as in this beautiful scene we read that "When he had made an end of speaking," when David had made himself known to Jonathan, that "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

In the previous chapter we read of the champion of the Philistines, Goliath, the giant of Gath, defying the armies of Israel, and holding them in dismay and terror. There stood their dreadful enemy day after day, and there stood the poor trembling hosts of Israel quailing under the power of the foe. Like "the strong man armed," of whom the Lord Jesus speaks in Luke xi. 21, keeping his palace, whose goods are in peace.

Who was this "strong man" to us? It was our strong enemy, Satan, whose captives, sometimes willing captives, sometimes unwilling captives, as by nature we are, but still under his undisputed sway. Satan's palace is this world; the world that came so beautiful out of the hands of God, with everything in it "very good." The old Serpent came and succeeded in usurping possession of the once beauteous world, making it his palace, and its inmates, the poor sinners of the world, his captives.

How our hearts would resent the thought of this, dear fellow-sinner; would try to put away the truth that we are captives to Satan, this "strong man." One is led captive by his position in the world, another by his riches, another by his vanity, another by his love of ease, another by his pleasures (so-called), another by his business, another by his religion, and another by his love of gain. Whatever it may be, one and all are his captives. And if ever our hearts would be disposed to resent the thought of this, we cannot escape the truth that the very weapon which he wields over us, the very armour in which, as the "strong man," he trusts in keeping this undisputed possession of his captives, is that which proves his sway. And that is Satan's great weapon, his armour in which he trusts! It is *Death!* which he wields as the judgment of God on our sin.

"The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.) The devil wields it over poor sinners. We read of "Him that had the

power of death, that is the devil." (Heb. ii. 14.) Surely he was the "strong man," and he was "armed" too with this dreadful weapon, death; and he kept his goods in peace; none to dispute his title—none able to disarm the foe.

Saul's armour, his helmet of brass, his coat of mail, his sword—(ch. xvii. 38, 39)—were worthless against Goliath of Gath. At last the deliverer came. "David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." (Verse 32.)

So with the poor sinner, Satan's captive; man's armour and man's strength were unable to set him free. When he was "without strength" the True Deliverer came. He came to show that God saveth not from the enemy with man's weapons. As David says (v. 47), "The Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands." He came to reveal the heart of God, who did not desire that the poor sinner should be a captive under Satan's grasp. He did not *set aside* death, the weapon which Satan wielded as God's judgment on sin. That would have been as much as saying that the judgment He had pronounced was a mistake. But He, as we read, "*Through death*"—the very strong weapon that the enemy wielded over poor captive sinners—"Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) He went down to the dust of death, in His own pity and compassion for poor captive sinners; took the wages of sin on Himself, made their sins His own, and accepted the judgment of God on account of sin; and so plucked out of Satan's hand his great weapon. As "David ran and stood upon the Philistine, and took *his* sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith"—(v. 51),—so the Lord Jesus snatched Satan's weapon out of his hand, destroyed his power of death, by going down Himself into its dark domain, and as the stronger than *he*, He came upon the strong man armed, and overcame him, taking from him the armour wherein he trusted. (Luke xi. 22.) "He led captivity captive," despoiling him of his goods, liberating the poor captive sinner, and returned victorious and a Conqueror!

Dear fellow-sinner, have you heard His own voice, as it were, relating His conquest for you? Have you listened to

the voice of Jesus with an adoring, believing spirit, relating in your ears His tale of victory? And like Jonathan, when David had made an end of speaking—and you, when you have heard His tale of delivering, emancipating victory, has your soul been knit to Him? Have you learned to love Him for His wondrous love to you? Learned to own Him as your Deliverer, your victorious Saviour? And that you are delivered, and that you are saved? The bondage through fear of death has been changed for you into "songs of deliverance," with which he has "compassed you about." That even now He has placed the weapon of the enemy in your hand, declaring that "Death is yours,"—(1 Cor. iii. 22)—so that you may sing, "O death! where is thy sting?" more than conquerer through Him that loved you!

What, then, do you not owe to Him? You say I owe Him all! How do we find Jonathan's love displayed? Just as true love ever displays itself. *It strips itself* for the beloved object, that the beloved one may have all. "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." It may be some wordly distinction or position, where the loved One has been cast out. It may be an alabaster box of ointment of the sinner of the city, who anointed the feet of Jesus, who was forgiven much and who loved much. It may be the widow's mite, "all her living," lavished upon the object of her heart. It may show itself in one way or in another, constrained by the love of Him, whose love was stronger than death. But, if true, it will show itself some way or other.

The Lord grant, dear fellow-sinner, that you may know Him in His story of love and deliverance to your soul; that He may make Himself thus known to you, committing Himself to one who values His changeless love, which passeth knowledge. And knowing Him, that your heart may learn to respond to His love; that your soul may be knit to Christ. David valued the love of Jonathan. He says of it, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." (2 Sam. i, 26.) Christ owned the love of the sinner of the city. He marked every action her love produced. It would seem that He had not heeded it as it passed; but when the time came to own it He recounted it all, nothing was forgotten. And the time is fast coming when not the faintest throb of true love to Christ, which the very heart of the poor delivered

one may not have remembered, but will be owned by Him who knew and owned it all, and by whom the very cup of cold water given in His name will not be forgotten !

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## HARPS OF GOD.

REV. xiv., xv.

ONE wondrous thing which may present itself to us in the Apocalypse (or Book of Revelation) is the combination of joys and terrors. This book is full of this ; and yet to nature, to the sense of flesh and blood, to the common sensibilities of the heart, this combination is strange. And yet so it is. Seals are broken, and judgments take their course ; trumpets are blown, and again judgments follow ; vials are emptied of their terrible contents, and the horrors of the scene are only aggravated. But joys, and songs, and shouts of congratulation, and the harps of harpers, are heard throughout from beginning to end, and all along the line of these awful visitations. From the Doxology that we listen to in ch. i. down to the abounding and repeated exultations in ch. xix., we listen to these joys and praises.

But further, in the progress of this book we may see the furnishing of the heavens and the earth as they are to be in the Millennial age. Of old, heaven was the dwelling-place of *angels*—I mean, that is the condition in which we see the heavens in Old Testament days. Jacob's vision of the ladder and many other scenes, as well as passages of Scripture without number, let us know this. But when the Lord Jesus had ascended, heaven became the dwelling-place of *glorified Man*, as well as of angels. This was a further furnishing of it. Stephen saw it in that condition. As soon as we read the 4th chapter of this book of revelations, we find that the same heaven has become the habitation of *translated saints*. The Living Creatures and the Enthroned Elders are there ; and all through the action of the book, from that moment, they continue there. Then in the 14th chapter we find other companies of saints joining them, and harping round the Beast and the Elders, as well as the Throne. This shows us heaven in new and wondrous conditions, peopled with more than hosts of angels, who excel in strength, and kept their first estate, even with redeemed sinners the witnesses of grace. Earth is to be furnished as

well as heaven. The opening of this 14th chapter shows us the beginning of that work; for there we see the "first fruits"—the pledge and sample of that people who are to fill and furnish the earth in the days of the kingdom, or, as we call it, the millennium. . . . They are learners of the song that is sung in heaven; they know the joy of *listening*, if others know the higher joy of *singing*; and not only do they listen, but, as we said before, they learn. They know what is harped on the harps of God on high. With such a people as this, the earth begins to be furnished for its millennial condition. This company of 144,000 is the first fruits of those who are by and bye to occupy the footstool in the days of the kingdom. And here we may observe there will be a link between the millennial heavens and earth; and the Lamb forms it. It is because this company on Mount Zion are with the Lamb that therefore they understand and share the joys the heavens know. As there will be a place on earth for the eye to feast itself in the sight of the heavenly glory; so, as we see here, there will be a place for the ear to delight itself in the hearing of the heavenly music. The nations that are saved shall walk in the light of the Holy Jerusalem. The company with the Lamb on Mount Zion listen to the harps of the harpers round the throne on high.

But of these harpers themselves we must speak a little further. As I have before observed they are not before "the throne" only, but before "the four beasts and elders." They form a new company in heaven, being (as I judge) the saints who have been martyred before the fifth seal, and to whom "white robes" had been given (ch. vi. 9-11). They were raised and glorified—translated to heaven; and there were (as we find from this Scripture—Rev. xiv. 2) given to them harps, like the beasts and elders themselves, and like them, also, were singing the new song (see ch. v. 8, 9, and xiv. 3), with this difference, as I have just hinted, they sing it round the beasts and elders, as well as round the throne. The beasts and elders had sung it as they fell worshipping the Lamb. Perfect and beautiful in its variety, as well as in its order, is all this heavenly scenery. But as we look off the harpers to consider the 144,000, we still see something beautiful and perfect in its place also. This company is in the midst of troubles; the vials are about to be discharged, as the trumpets have now all been blown. They are in the thick and midst of fearful sights, troubles, visitations; and

judgments, such as might well occupy the heart and fill it with terror and forebodings—but they are at leisure from it all, free in their spirits to listen to the voice of joy and worship in heaven. They have deeply retired into the presence of Christ, and their hearts are at leisure to be in company with the calm and the sunshine of heaven, though earth and its terrible circumstances are around them. This is blessed. How little we know of such leisure by reason of retirement into the presence of Christ! How quickly does the presence of circumstances get the mastery and give all its occupations to our timid hearts. Jehoshaphat's army knew this! The Psalmist now and again seems to anticipate the way and experience of the remnant (the saved remnant of Israel) in these closing days of their history, ere the kingdom comes. Isaiah says :—"And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps" (Is. xxx. 32.) But this as we pass on. At v. 6 of this chapter we are in the world again, neither in heaven with the harpers, nor on Zion with the 144,000. Upon this a voice from heaven addresses John, and says to him, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth," the spirit affirming this, and giving this blessedness its character, saying, "Yea, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." That is, those who are martyred in that day, who "die in the Lord," are to enjoy an order of blessedness beyond those who outlive that day, inasmuch as they have *reward* as well as *rest*. John is then given another vision. He sees the reaping of the earth, and the casting of them into the great wine press of the wrath of God, by an angel. These actions, I believe, symbolize the setting of the earth in holy order, and in righteousness as for the kingdom. This is as the severance of the tares from the wheat, or the gathering of the good into baskets, and the casting of the bad away, as we read in Matt. xiii. It is the full furnishing of the earth—it is the harvest after the "first fruits," which had, as we saw, been gathered in the time of v. 1.—(This harvest appears to be the fruit or result of the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, as we read in v. 6 of this same chapter.)—And these actions of reaping the harvest, and gathering the vintage close chapter xiv.

After this we are called for another moment up to heaven again, such is the varied action and scenery of the book. A



sea of glass was seen before the throne, in ch. iv., but it was then unoccupied; now it is filled, as this passage (ch. xv. 1-4) shows us—filled, I judge, by a company who have been sufferers unto death, under the Beast; and therefore it is that this sea of glass is seen by John as “mingled with fire,” for those who stand upon it are not merely conquerors, but conquerors *through death*—martyr conquerors, through martyrdom, or fire: they had refused to take the mark of the Beast in the crisis of the world’s history. They owned Him from whom the world had revolted, and which world was then in its hour of fullest pride and daring. They had fallen victims to it, having loved not their lives unto the death. Like their Lord, they had resisted unto blood; Like Him they were martyred, and, accordingly, they stand in triumph now before the throne on high. This is like Moses and the Congregation of Israel on the Banks of the Red Sea; they, therefore, sing his song as we read here,—“the Song of Moses”—that is, the song of victory. But Moses and the congregation were not martyrs; they had not fallen under the sword of Pharaoh, as this company had under the sword of the Beast. They were at the Red Sea a *living* people, which had left Egypt in defiance of all the strongest enmity of that land, and it was their *foes*, not themselves who had perished. But this company on the sea of glass had been slain—martyred for their faithfulness to Christ—which Moses and his company had not been. They have therefore a song beyond the “Song of Moses,” even “the Song of the Lamb.” This song is a song of victory *through death*. Debtors to the blood of Jesus through redemption, and for all things, still, as saints, like their Lord, they had overcome the world by dying under its hatred and persecution; accordingly, they sing the “Song of the Lamb,” as well as the “Song of Moses.” Theirs is a richer song than that of Israel, just as they are standing on higher and more wondrous ground—not only on a “sea of glass,” but a “sea of glass mingled with fire.” . . . But now, when we reach this point, *heaven* is, I may say, fully furnished, as we saw at the close of ch. xiv. that *earth* was. The best companies have now reached it. The sea of glass, vacant before, is now occupied and, like their brethren who were on high before them, whether the living creatures or crowned elders of ch. v., or the martyred saints under the 5th seal, this conquering band now receives harps to harp withal! But here fresh wonders

break upon the apprehension of the soul. These harps are called "Harps of God." Wondrous surely! Harps made for their joy, now that they are enthroned in glory in heaven. As of old, at the beginning, coats had been made for their nakedness, when they were in their sins on earth (Gen. iii. 21), God Himself, as with His own hands, makes robes of righteousness to adorn us, to clothe us worthy of His own presence, sinners in ourselves as we be. And God Himself again, as with His own hands, makes instruments of joy to gladden, as to fill His own courts of Glory with suited pleasures. . . . God Himself serves us at the beginning of our history as self-ruined sinners, and at the end of our history as glorified saints! He serves us in our ruins and in our glories! As the Lord, in the day of His ministry, had healed us, and fed us, and washed our feet, so did He anticipate His ministry in the coming kingdom when he said of Himself, and of all His people, "Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth to serve them." (Luke xii. 37.)

And if the Lord thus anticipates the day when He will serve us in our joy, we ought to anticipate that joy itself, and even in spirit take our harps and sing,—

Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared,  
Unworthy though I be,  
For me a blood-bought, free reward,  
*A Harp of God* for me!

'Tis strung and tuned for endless years,  
And formed by power divine,  
To sound in God the Father's ears,  
No other name but Thine.

—J. G. B.

## FAITHFULNESS, AND WAITING FOR CHRIST.

LET me ask the Christian soul a question. Are the claims of the Lord Jesus on you of deep and paramount importance in your eyes? In proposing such a question, I do so to those who profess to love and own Christ as their *Lord*, and whose consciences have been for ever set at rest, and introduced by faith into the full, cloudless presence of God in Christ—to those who see every question that could

hinder their perfect peace answered by the atoning blood—past, present, future—all secure. Are these claims of sufficient weight that you would seek to know His mind and will, even if it were to break up the most cherished associations of your heart? And, knowing His mind and will, are you seeking for grace to walk therein? I feel this a deeply solemn question in the present day—a day of the highest sounding profession, without conscience or life toward God. Religion is putting forth her fairest and most seductive forms, seeking the aid of science and poetry and art to deck herself withal. Holding in her hand a cup of abominations which stupifies the senses, lulls to sleep the conscience. And even where she is not putting on the outward adorning she practices other deceits. Those whose senses would not be ensnared by the outward adorning, are ensnared by the specious arguments of expediency, and a round of evangelical activity—works perfect, it may be, before men, but not before God (Rev. iii. 2.) She is suiting herself more and more to natural, unrenewed man; and under the name of Christ, she turns away her eye from Christ, and boasts that she is “rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing.” (Rev. iii. 17.) “The form of godliness, without the power,” surely is the condition of things around us. The Lordship of Christ is ignored. The presence of the Holy Ghost is either denied in words, or, what is even worse, professed to be acknowledged in words, and completely denied in practice. This is truly solemn. One of the very vital, central truths of Christianity, and of the Church of God—that which marks off, in a clear line, this dispensation from all that went before or which follows, denied; and the whole merged into a heap of confusion, out of which souls can hardly find a clue, and are “ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” “The foundation of God stands sure,” whatever man’s unfaithfulness has been, God’s principles do not alter. And the responsibility of His people never alters. While it is their blessing to know that “the Lord knoweth them that are his,” still their responsibility is, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity;” iniquity connected with the great house and its corruptions. (2 Tim. ii. 19, &c.) The Christian is to purge himself from the vessels to dishonour, that he may be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, prepared unto

every good work. He must not, as we have before touched upon, rest satisfied with the corruption, nor need he try to repair the injury that has been done: that will never be repaired till the professing mass meets its end in judgment. His path is a plain one,—“Depart from iniquity;” “Purge himself from the vessels to dishonour.” And now comes his personal walk of holiness. He is to “flee also youthful lusts;” and then in his walk in the company of others, to “follow righteousness, faith, peace, charity *with them* that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” This is the principle—a plain one—separation *from* evil, and *to* God in the midst of it. May He who alone can do so, give subjection to His word to those whose eyes fall upon these pages, and a growing separation and deepening subjection, as they go on their pathway, to those who by grace have learned in their measure to walk therein. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;” and “if a man love me he will keep my words.” (John xiv.) This is characteristic of Christianity. It is intelligent obedience rendered to a *person*, not to a *law*. The time was, when the faithful and undefiled in the way were blessed who walked in the law of the Lord. Then God was unrevealed. He was hidden behind the veil, and the dispensational barriers of the age. He was hidden, and had sent forth His claims to men in the law; and although it had said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and with all thy strength,” still it did not reveal a *person* to attract the heart. That time has passed away. Christ has come, and “by *him* we believe in God.” (1 Pet. i.) And to Him we owe the love of our hearts and the obedience of our lives—One whose love constrains us to live henceforth “not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again.” (2 Cor. v.) It is a *person* we are thus called upon to live for and to love; One who has sanctified us unto obedience such as that which characterized His own (1 Pet. i. 2); surrendering self, life, all, for those who hated Him. The law proposed that a man should love his neighbour “*as himself*.” The obedience of Christ was the entire *surrendering of self* for His enemies.

The Lord Jesus appealed in His day to the Jews (Luke xii. 54-57), to discern “the signs of the times,” even by the force of natural conscience, and to judge what was right. His word should find an echo in many a Christian heart

now that has sunk down to sleep amongst the dead. (Eph. v. 14). Everything around us in the present day—religion, the state of men, nations, powers, kingdoms—are each gradually and perceptibly taking their places for the closing scenes of Judgment (which introduces the kingdoms).

The Christian, instructed beforehand of these things, can watch them calmly and quietly, awaiting the coming of His Lord. He knows his calling is a heavenly one, where judgments cannot come. The coming of the Lord, the Son of God, for His people, is the one boundary or horizon of his hopes. His actions and service and plans and sojourn here are arranged in view of that event; and if called to serve his Lord and Master here, he does so in the sense that he serves as in the last days. May a deepening sense of this fill the souls of His people; and may this their proper hope, ere the day dawn, be formed in their hearts, and serve to direct their ways.

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## “WILT THOU GO WITH THIS MAN?”

GENESIS xxii. to xxiv.

FEW who have read the 22nd chapter of the Book of Genesis with any amount of spiritual intelligence, have failed to see, in the scene described there, a figure of the death and resurrection of Christ. Abraham, at the bidding of God, binding his son Isaac a sacrifice, and preparing to offer him up as a burnt-offering to the Lord. The Lord staying his hand, which grasped the uplifted knife, and pointing to the ram caught in the thicket, the substitute of His own providing. And then Abraham receiving his son as from the dead in a figure. (Heb. xi. 19.)

All this speaks, to the heart renewed by grace, of the wondrous story of the death and resurrection of God's Lamb, and the complete and perfect settlement of the question of sin which was wrought thereby.

But when we read chapter xxiii. we find something more. We read of the death and burial of Sarah, Isaac's mother; and of his father Abraham having no portion in the Land of Canaan, but must even buy a sepulchre; and is a stranger and a sojourner there. This sequence of events, interpreted in the light of the New Testament, afford special delight to the soul. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus is

followed by the setting aside, for the time, of His nation Israel, figured in the death of Sarah, the mother of Isaac. And the result of all this, that the Jew, instead of being restored to his land under his Messiah, is a wanderer in the earth, having now no portion in the land promised to the fathers.

But when we open chapter xxiv. a story of wondrous exactitude and beauty unfolds itself to us. Isaac was dead and risen in a figure, and the parent stem is set aside. And now Abraham, Isaac's father, desires to get a bride for his only son, a son who cannot return to the land of his people. And Abraham sent his servant who ruled over his house, charged with this errand to get a wife for his son Isaac. This wife for his son must be brought to him, for his son cannot return thither again. "Beware, thou, that thou bring not my son thither again." (Verse 6.)

So when Christ died and rose, and Israel, to whom the promises would have been fulfilled had they received Him, were set aside, and became wanderers, without a portion in their land. It was then we find for the first time the wondrous purpose of God, His "eternal purpose" revealed. And His purpose was, that His only Son, Jesus, should have a "bride," one to share with Him His throne of heavenly glory, and to be joint possessor with and in Him of all that the Father had bestowed. As long as Israel were the objects of the Lord's dealings this could not be. *Then* He had an earthly nation, the centre and platform, we may say, of all His dealings with the world. But *now*, once they had refused Him and the kingdom he had proposed, he has an earthly people no more for a time. And so, when Christ is hidden in the heavens, and glorified there, the Holy Ghost has come from heaven, charged, as it were, with this wondrous mission, to gather out of Jew and Gentile a bride for His Son.

Of His wondrous mission the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples when he was going away. "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. *All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.*" (John xvi. 13-15.) Just as Abraham's servant, explaining his errand, says, "And the Lord hath

blessed my master greatly, and he is become great ; and He hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and man-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses ; and Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old : *and unto him hath he given all that he hath.*" (Verse 35 and 36.) So we read also in John iii. 35—"The Father loveth the Son, *and hath given all things into his hand.*" Abraham's servant took some of his master's treasures and put them upon this chosen one, tokens of the grace of him for whom she was sought. "The man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, of ten shekels weight of gold." (Verse 22.) Thus the Holy Spirit takes of the treasures of "wisdom and knowledge," and of the "unsearchable riches of Christ," and makes them known to the Church, espousing her as a "chaste virgin unto Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 2.)

And now, when the espoused one is to begin her long wilderness journey in the charge of him who came for her, the servant "brings forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and *gave them to Rebekah.*" And thus we find that when Christ ascended up on high, leading captive captivity, He gave gifts unto men. And the Holy Ghost, the Church's guide and companion, takes up these gifts of Christ (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher), and uses them to strengthen her heart and guide her feet, and train her according to the heart of Him who will at last "present her to himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

But now the world tries to prevent her from going on to meet her Lord. Rebekah's family says, "Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten ; after that she shall go." They would like to have her stay with them, and not separate herself to Isaac, obedient to the call of Abraham's servant. And so does the world. It likes not the thought that the Church is a heavenly bride, "espoused as a chaste virgin unto Christ:" because, if she walks in the power of her calling, she *cannot* sink down to its level, and, as it were, sanction its ways by her presence in its midst. She knows that her Bridegroom has nothing to do with the world now ; that He has been here, and that He tried if it would receive Him, and that it only rejected Him and cast Him out. That her heavenly guide has told her of His charge, "Beware, thou, that thou bring not my son hither again."

She knows in her heart that *He* has no portion here, and therefore *she* can have none but the gifts and graces which He bestows.

She decides the great question herself. "We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth." "*Wilt thou go with this man?* and she said, "*I will go.*" Thus would the Church, if guided by the Spirit of God, ever reply. There would be no hesitation in her answer if she followed and was led by her heavenly Guide. There would be no indecision, no turning back, thinking of what she had left behind. There would be no divided heart in her, but where her treasure is there would her heart be also.

"And Rebekah arose, . . . and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way." She was "forgetting those things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before." Her heart would ever be saying, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) How sad if, instead of this, she was turning behind her, and longing after that which she had left behind.

But now we have the end of the wilderness journey brought before us in our beautiful Scripture.

"And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi (the well of Him that liveth and seeth me); and he *lifted up his eyes and saw*. . . . And Rebekah *lifted up her eyes*, and when *she saw* Isaac,"—The journey was over, the wilderness was past, hope was changed to fruition, faith was changed to sight. The toil of the wilderness world, dear fellow-Christians, is nearly over. We know not that before you read these pages the Church's Bridegroom will have come. We know not if, even as the lines are penned, He may not have left His throne of glory, to descend and meet His people in the air. The Holy Ghost has, as Christ promised, abode with the Church for ever. He has been with her all through, unfaithful to Christ as she has been. He has awakened her hopes, and enabled her to *lift up her eyes and see* Him by faith, and has put into her mouth that longing inviting word, "The Spirit and the Bride say, come," in response to the voice of Him who has just told her, "I am the bright and the morning star." (Rev. xxii. 16, 17.)

And now, dear reader, can you not for yourself realise in some little measure the testimony of the Comforter, the Church's guide in her wilderness journey? Surely if ever



He leads the heart to look behind, He can only lead it to *one object*, the death of the true Isaac, even Christ. He can point to that and unfold its varied excellencies, and glories, and wondrous efficacy, and its result, which is the believer's portion; as that through which his Lord has gone to the throne of His glory, through which he has redemption and forgiveness of his sins. He can unfold how the glory of God has been established through it. But he never can, never does, lead to a doubting thought, an unbelieving fear. Nor can He ever lead the soul to earthly things; rather to those that are heavenly—to the riches, and glories, and person of Him with whom He fills the heart.

I ask you then, "*Wilt thou go with this man?*" Will you suffer Him (the Blessed Spirit) to lead and to guide you with unhindered, ungrieved power? Think on your association with the world if you are not separate from it, and above all with the so-called religious world; and think of your walk and ways, and answer this question, "Are you grieving and hindering the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption?" (Eph. iv. 30.) Or are you "led of the Spirit?" (Gal. v. 18.) Are the accents of your heart even now, "*I will go.*" And if this be so, your conversation will be in heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change your body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory, according to the power whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

NOTE.—It is interesting to see that in the following chapter of the Book of Genesis (xxv) we find the election of Israel. The elder, Esau, shall serve the younger, Jacob. "Jacob have I loved." Poor rebellious Israel, long cast-off among the nations, will, *after the Church is safe with Christ*, be again restored to their land and their blessings under the new covenant, by the grace of Him whose gifts and calling are without repentance.

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## A THOUGHT ON REVELATIONS.

THE prophetic part of the book of Revelation ends at the 5th verse of chap. xxii. From the 6th verse to the end is a little closing word which the Lord has for the Church *personally*, after He has revealed to her all the purposes and counsels of

God which had gone before, up to this point, most of which do not personally concern herself, although she is told about them. This is a very touching proof of confidence on the Lord's part. May his people's hearts not be indifferent to this. It was a touching proof of the confiding love of the Lord to Abraham in Gen. xviii. When on his way to the destruction of the cities of the plain, He turned aside to tell his friend Abraham what He was about to do, although it had no immediate reference to him. What He told Abraham concerned the cities of the plain. And so, when passing on to the judgment of the world, He turns aside, as it were, to confide in His people as His friends, and in this precious relationship He makes known all things unto them:—"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

The closing portion of the Book of Revelation is a word addressed *personally* to the Church, and in it the coming of the Lord is referred to three times, each mention having a special point in view. In verse 7 the Lord says:—"Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." In verse 12 He says:—"And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be." And in verse 20 He says:—"Surely I come quickly;" and this, having presented Himself to the church as "the bright and the morning star," drawing forth the cry of the Spirit in the Bride, "Come," He responds to the invitation, "Surely I come quickly;" to which the heart, taught of the Spirit responds again—"Even so; come, Lord Jesus." In these three ways the Lord refers to His coming.

1st. With reference to keeping the sayings of the prophecy of the Book of Revelation.

2nd. With reference to the result of that coming to all; that it puts its solemn seal upon the state in which each is found.

3rd. His response to the inviting "*Come*" of the Bride in whom the Spirit dwells, and leads thus to express the desires which He has formed.

In the opening of the Book of Revelation there is a blessing promised on him that reads, they that hear, and they who keep the things which are written in the book of the prophecy (chap. i. 3). And then at the close the blessing is

repeated (verse 7) for him that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of the book. This is striking, and worthy of our attention, because to no other Scripture do we find such special promises attached.

A simple Christian mind would naturally say, "I don't understand the scope of the Book of Revelation at all; it is difficult of interpretation, and I must needs understand the meaning of the seals and trumpets and vials, and the various symbols contained in it, before I should know how to walk in order to have the promised blessing." Now, I desire to give a key, in a few simple words, to the general bearing of the book, so that the simple mind may not be discouraged, but rather helped, in seeking for the blessing, in framing his path and ways with reference to it.

In chap. i. 19, we read—"Write the things which thou hast seen." Now, it is plain that this refers to the vision of Christ, in His judicial character, walking amongst the candlesticks in the previous part of chap. i.

Again we read—"Write . . . . the things which are." This refers to the state of things described in chaps. ii. and iii. This gives a complete sevenfold successive history of the church, her departure from her first love (chap. ii. 4), then her gradual declension and sinking down into this world, where Satan's seat is (chap. ii. 13); corruption, deadness, and lukewarmness, till the threat is pronounced to Laodicea (chap. iii. 16), that the Lord would spew her out of His mouth, as something false and nauseous to Him.

Again, in same verse (chap. i. 19), we read—"Write . . . . the things which shall be hereafter;" or, more properly, "after these things;" i.e., after the two previous divisions of the book which the 19th verse marks out. We must turn to chap. iv. 1 to find the commencement of this third division of the book. "After this (or these things), I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show the things which must be hereafter;" or rather, "after these things;" i.e., the two divisions which had gone before, chaps. i. ii. and iii.

Now, once we see that the book is divided thus, into three great divisions, we should desire to ascertain the leading characteristics of each division.

In the first division Christ is represented as one whose eyes were "as firm as a flame of fire and his feet like unto

brass," &c. Here the Lord is represented as in His intensely judicial character, taking note of everything, while scrutinizing the light He had set up and committed to the church. One with whom the faintest flicker of the light of a candlestick which burned with a dimmer light than that which was to be His own reflection, met His solemn and searching gaze. It is not here a question of grace in salvation, but of light-bearing and testimony in the world—a city set on a hill which should not be hid. If I am enabled to see Him thus walking with solemn judicial step amongst the candlesticks, I seek to frame my course accordingly; and although the light is very unlike that which He at one time set up, still I feel *my* little responsibility has never changed, and that He never lowers the standard; and thus, through the supply of His grace, I become one who keeps the things which are written in the prophecy, and thus one who seeks to have the promised blessing.

In the second division of the book I learn that the Church, in her responsible place as a lamp for Christ in the midst of the world, has so failed and drifted away from her first love, that she has become of the world, and the very source and origin of corruption. I find that when she has become so corrupt as to leave no hope of return or improvement, and that the Lord's coming is now alone to be looked for to set things to right (chap. ii. 25; iii. 3-11), and that this departure becomes more developed till the whole is rejected. Well, this truth sanctifies me, *i.e.*, it separates me in the midst of the corruption. I see that the Lord will not be with me while I am identified with what is evil, and I learn to "overcome." I shape my course accordingly, and keep my garments unspotted from the evil around, having in view what I gather of the Lord's mind in this division of Revelations; and thus, through His grace, I get the blessing promised to him that keeps the sayings of the prophecy.

And in the third division I learn one grand truth amongst the rest, which is, that the world, with its powers and energies, and march of intellect, and boasted advance, is rushing on to judgment. That as soon as "the things that are," *i.e.*, those belonging to the history of the church in responsibility are ended, that a throne is set to judge the world in righteousness—a throne to judge the quick or living. I learn that all that is around me ends in judgment, ere the Lord Jesus, the rightful heir, possesses His kingdom. That when He

comes, He “purges out of His kingdom all things which offend, and them which do iniquity,” thus taking possession of it by judgment. Well, if the world is to be judged thus—and her boast of advancement is only a token of its near approach—when she is saying “Peace and safety,” and “sudden destruction” at her doors. And saying this at a time when “men’s hearts are failing them for fear,” and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Conscious of this, I withdraw myself from the whole scene, and stand aside from the world. I bow to the powers that be, obeying every ordinance of man for my Lord’s sake, while at the same time, not of them. I am conscious how all is ordered from the beginning, and forewarned how all will end, I am calm and tranquil. I frame my pathway according to the Wisdom of Him who has given me a light for every step of the way, in a scene of which He has instructed me how all will end, and where its energies are tending. Thus I get the blessing through His goodness, promised to him who keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

“Behold; I come quickly : blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

## “DISCOURAGED BECAUSE OF THE WAY.”

NUM. xxi. 4.

PILGRIM of earth, who art journeying to heaven !  
 Heir of eternal life ! child of the day !  
 Cared for, watched over, beloved and forgiven,  
 Art thou “discouraged because of the way ?”

Cared for, watched over, tho’ often thou seemest  
 Justly forsaken, nor counted a child.  
 Loved and forgiven, though rightly thou deemest  
 Thyself all unlovely, impure and defiled.

Weary and thirsty—no water brook near thee,  
 Press on, nor faint at the length of the way ;  
 The God of thy life will assuredly hear thee,  
 He will provide thee with strength for the day.

Break through the brambles and briars that obstruct thee,  
 Dread not the gloom nor the darkness of night ;  
 Lean on the hand that will safely conduct thee,  
 Trust to *His* eye to whom darkness is light !

Be trustful, be steadfast, whatever betides thee,  
 Only one thing do thou ask of the Lord—  
 Grace to go forward wherever He guides thee,  
 Simply believing the truth of His word.

Still on thy spirit deep anguish is pressing—  
 Not for the yoke that His wisdom bestows;  
 A heavier burden thy soul is distressing—  
 A heart that is slow in His love to repose.

Earthliness, coldness, unthankful behaviour—  
 Ah, thou may'st sorrow, but do not despair;  
 Even this grief thou may'st bring to thy Saviour,  
 Cast upon Him e'en this burden and care!

Bring all thy hardness, His power can subdue it;  
 How full is the promise, the blessing how free!  
 "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it,"  
 "Abide in my love, and be joyful in me."

## "WHY THE BUSH IS NOT BURNT."

(Exodus iii. 3.)

WHAT a wonderful discovery of God did Moses make when he kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, at the backside of the desert! The very discovery, dear sinner, you want to make of Him, to win your confidence to Him, and enable you to trust Him fully. It was surely a "great sight," as Moses said. "I will now turn aside and see this *great sight; why the bush is not burnt.*" This was the wonderful secret. It was nothing wonderful that God should display Himself in a flame of fire, or in any other form He chose. Nor was it anything wonderful that a bush should be growing at the backside of the desert. But the wonder of all wonders was, *why the bush was not burnt!*

Think a moment, dear fellow-sinner, of the nature of God with respect to evil and sin. Such is His nature, that if He were to manifest it, where sin is, He *must* burn up and consume everything contrary to that nature. When Moses warned the children of Israel of the consequences of idolatry, thus provoking the wrath of God by going after strange gods, he says, "For the Lord thy God is a *consuming fire*, even a jealous God." (Deut. iv. 24.) How often did they experience this terrible character of God when they had pro-

voked Him by their murmurs in the wilderness? When they complained and murmured (Num. xi. 1), “His anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them and consumed them.” Again, when Korah and his company rebelled against the Lord’s authority, in Moses and Aaron (Num. xvi.), “There came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.”

We have in Isaiah vi. a sample of a sinner under the beams of this burning holiness of God’s moral nature. There the prophet had a vision, in which he saw the Lord of Hosts, high and lifted up, His train filling the temple; and when the accompanying seraphim (or burners) cry, with faces veiled with their wings, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts,” the poor soul-stricken prophet fell upon his face and cried, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” He knew in his inmost soul that the very moment such an one as he, as a sinner, should have to do with that God, whose burning holiness was before him, he *must* be consumed!

Now, apply this character, this nature of God, to your own heart, dear reader, and just answer the question,—Is there a single thing in my heart, in my whole being, that would not be consumed with this intense holiness of God if I were to stand before Him this moment in my sins? And yet, dear reader, if *ever* you come into His presence, you *must* come there so as to answer the *full* display of His nature. You could not, you dare not be there on other ground than this. It would deny His nature to have you there otherwise.

Now, if we look at the story of Exodus iii., we find that God was displaying His nature before Moses as a consuming fire. One who, however he may act in the display of mercy, and grace, and love, never denies Himself. And the secret Moses learnt was this, that while God was a “consuming fire,” He was *not* acting in this character, but was revealing Himself to Moses *in grace*! This was the secret, dear fellow-sinner, that while God was there “a consuming fire,” He was not consuming! Oh, what a blessed revelation of Himself! How precious thus to know Him. How are you to know Him now? Just in *this character of grace*, dear fellow-sinner. Where are you to know Him thus? *In Christ*! Why are you to know Him thus, and without fear? Just because the burning holiness of His hatred and abhor-

rence of sin burst in all its fullest display on the head of His own beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Because His Son, Jesus Christ, in His own person, bore the fullest burst of divine wrath—the cup of wrath—on His cross. Exhausted it, so that not a drop remained for the poor sinner. Thus it is, dear fellow-sinners, that you are to know God in this day of grace. If you know God, *in Christ*, you know a God of perfect grace. Out of Christ, you must know Him by-and-bye as a consuming fire.

Now, cannot you tell why it was that the bush was not burned? Cannot you say, “It was because God was revealing Himself as a God of grace, but who was not thereby setting aside His nature in doing so?”

Do you know Him thus, dear reader? Can you say, “I know Him, I know Him?” Hold fast then this blessed discovery of Him. “Let us hold fast grace (margin), whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for *our* God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. xii. 28, 29. “*Our* God,” that is, God as we know Him now *in Christ*.)

## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, AS PRESENTED IN THE PARABLES IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

(Concluded from page 129.)

BUT here we come to the climax. The Sabbath—the public link of the covenant between Israel and Jehovah—the Lord as publicly breaks. He defends His disciples eating in the corn-fields on the Sabbath-day. He heals the withered arm and silences the objections of the Pharisee. The Lord of the Sabbath sets aside its ceremonial sanctity. And this was the character of those who would receive the testimony, viz., the setting aside the old covenant. They were babes. From the wise and prudent, according to this world, these things were hidden.

The Pharisees again take counsel to kill Him. But He still lingers in mercy over the people. He heals one possessed with a devil; blind and dumb. The fickle multitude seem to be on the verge of confessing Him to be the Messiah,—“Is this not the son of David?” But the watchful inveterate hatred of the Pharisee again breaks forth, and



quells the rising thought, if indeed the people really entertained it. For the second time they say, "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

Jesus convicts them of stupidity, as well as of enmity and blasphemy. They cannot go further than this, and Jesus disowns them—breaks off all connection with them. All national ties are publicly sundered. He will only have disciples for His mother and His brethren. The breach for the time is irreparable. They would not have Him. Now He will not have them.

At this point the aspect and presentation of the kingdom are very different from that which was apparent in the iii. and iv. chaps. of this gospel. Then it was to the nation as such; they were all called. Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached the kingdom as ready for their acceptance. They needed but to repent to enter into it. "*Many are called.*" But now it is elective, *i.e.* grace calls out, as in Matthew's case; and Jesus takes the title of Son of Man, and the door opens to the Gentile.

As to the condition of those who thenceforth enter, they are poor, persecuted, and reviled. Babes in the estimation of the wise and prudent of this world. "*Few are chosen.*" Quite another principle from the apparent one in the opening of this gospel.

There had been given to the nation three distinct calls. First, that of John the Baptist; then, that of Jesus; last, that of the twelve; and this third distinct call was at that moment in progress, when the rejection was consummated. And so far as this gospel relates is now going on. But the rejection now completely opens the way for the new thing brought out in xiii. chap. Until that rejection was open and manifest, the sower could not go forth. Now He goes in the fulness of power and of grace; for man has been tried and has nothing for God. But God has everything for man.

## L I F E.

LIFE is a sacred thing. It belongs to God. Man lost it at the beginning, and it then turned to God: so that, when now enjoyed, it is received from God. Adam, as soon as he lost it, was taught to know that he could never of himself

regain it. Cherubim, with flaming sword, were set at the gate of the garden, to keep every way the way of the tree of life. He might, and he did receive it, through the Word of Truth, the promise of God, the gospel of a bruised and yet victorious Jesus, a dead and risen Saviour. But in himself he had it not, and of himself he never could regain it; and as surely, never transmit it to us. God took it back entirely to Himself—it belongs to Him—and we who have it, have it by gift from Him.

This is afterwards told to Noah, though by another symbol than that of the cherubim guarding the way of the tree of life. Flesh was given to Noah to eat; but the blood was not given with it, for the blood was the life, and man had lost that, and could not recover it, (Gen. ix.) and this same ordinance, that blood was not to be eaten, was continued under the Law, to the same end. (Lev. xvii.)

We, therefore, as of Adam, ought to be full of thoughts of death in ourselves; but Christ may be full of thoughts of life in Himself. Nay, He must be so. We may see the proof of this presently; but here we may just say, it becomes Him to be as full of thoughts of *life* in Himself, as it becomes us to be full of thoughts of *death* in ourselves.

Accordingly He gives blood to us to drink, saying, “drink ye all of it”—“except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” And so when He had risen from the dead, this life which He had pledged from the beginning, He actually, really, solemnly, and formally imparted, breathing on His elect, and saying, “receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

This is life which cannot be touched. The murderous stones may disfigure Stephen’s present tabernacle, take it down roughly, or tear it to pieces; but his life in Christ is unharmed, his spirit takes its journey homeward—“absent from the body, present with the Lord”—there awaiting a clothing worthy of itself—eternal life—*itself*—“that immortality may be swallowed up of life.”

This life is hid. God has put it where of old He put His own law, in Christ, the ark. The life was forfeited by Adam, and God has secured it in Christ. The law was broken by man, so that Moses cast down the tables at the foot of the hill, and God put them into the ark. *His* honour and *our* life are thus secured alike.

God coming into this world, where death is reigning,

must come as the living God, as the one who purposes to overthrow death and to give life again. Life, in victorious strength, to those who had been the captives of the power of death. Surely, we may say, it is in such glory as this that He must act and show Himself in such a world where sin is reigning unto death. And so we are taught to know it to be. And the faith that apprehends Him, the faith that is of the operation of God, knows Christ, and sees Him in that glory.

Peter represents or utters this faith in Matt. xvi. 16; and Jesus at once seals him as taught of the Father.

And this is "the Rock." It is God in victorious life, and the church is built upon Christ as such Rock, as the Lord of Life in victory over the power of death. And, therefore, it is unassailable. The gates of Hell shall not prevail. Life in Adam was to be tested, it was tested, and yielded to the power of death. The life we have from our Rock has been already tested and proved, and stood in victorious strength, so that we get eternal, infallible life. "The last Adam was made a quickening spirit." And, as we said, it becomes Him to be full of thought of *life in Himself*; and John's gospel shows our Lord to us as taking this knowledge of Himself.

This gives that gospel its precious, characteristic glory. The Spirit, in the evangelist, recognises this at the beginning, for, speaking of Jesus, he says, (chap. i. 4), "in Him was life." In chap. ii. 19, the Lord Himself recognises this, saying, "destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," and He spake of the temple of His body.

In chap. iii., after teaching the need of being born again, He anticipates his being lifted up on the cross for the purpose of imparting "eternal life;" and, immediately afterwards, speaks of the Father's purpose in the mission of the Son being for the same end.

In chap. iv. He speaks of Himself as working in the track of the Father, as the source and communicator of life. In chap. vi. His thoughts are all about life, I may say it is His subject throughout His discourse to the people. In chap. vii. He stands as at the head of the river of life, ready to turn its abundant streams through the bellies of all thirsty ones who will come to Him. In chap. viii. He declares Himself to be the "Light of life," and announces the blessed, victorious character of that life which He carries, and which He imparts, saying, "if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death."

Chaps. ix., x., close His public ministry : and, as commenting upon what it was, He says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

But after this, in a retired scene of service, at the grave of Lazarus of Bethany, we find the same mind in Him very fully expressed. All around Him are full of thoughts of death. Disciples, Martha, Mary, their friends, all alike are talking of death. But Jesus has no thought but of life. This is most blessedly characteristic. And in order to display the life that he carried in himself for sinners in its full glory and triumph, He remains where He was till the sickness of His friend had ended in death ; and then He goes (as God Almighty to Sarah) as the quickener of the dead—"the resurrection and the life."

This is abundant to show us, as I said, that *life* is what the son of man sees in Himself, and through Him imparted to others, all through this gospel of John. He surely was entitled to be full of thoughts of this precious mystery, and He *was* full of them.

But I would add, that when at the end of this gospel, the evangelist himself speaks again, as he had done at the beginning, it is of *life* connected with Jesus he speaks. "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

J. G. B.

## AS CHRIST IS SO ARE WE: OR, THE CHRISTIAN'S RECEPTION OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

Read JOHN i.

It is impossible to know what is passing in the mind of another until he expresses himself by the word of his mouth. There is nothing more invisible than a man's thoughts. God is invisible, and no man hath seen Him at any time. He dwells in light unapproachable, to which no man can approach. It was, however, from all eternity, His purpose to make Himself known, and that, too, according to the perfection and fulness of his own nature, which is love. He *is* love—the God of all grace. To the display of the praise of the

glory of his grace, the believer has been predestinated; to the adoption of a son by Jesus Christ to Himself. Sinners have been saved by His mighty power with a full salvation. God has delivered them from eternal wrath, He has cleansed them from their sins, he has quickened them together with Christ the Life, He has raised them up together, and He has made them sit together in heavenly places in Christ. But for what purpose? In order that, in the ages to come, He might show forth *the exceeding riches of His grace*, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 4-7.) For ever His delights were with the sons of men, and He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth. (Prov. viii.) Loved he has, and that with everlasting love, and to manifest this has been His eternal will and purpose. God is, however, invisible, and no man hath seen Him at any time. In order, therefore, to accomplish this wondrous purpose, Jesus by the *Eternal Spirit*, offered Himself to God as a Lamb without spot and blemish. He was the anointed One, the One "set up from everlasting"—set up as the Word of God—the express image of God's person, so that He might make a full manifestation of God, and that we by faith, seeing Jesus, might see and know Him—as Jesus Himself said, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." "I and my Father are one."

Our chapter then presents, in the first place, Christ as the Word of God. "In the beginning *was the Word*. This was no new character of the Lord Jesus. He is the eternal Word, co-eternal and equal with the Father. "In the *beginning was the Word*." Eternal as God's purpose was to manifest Himself, so eternal was Jesus as the Word. He was as we have before noticed, the Anointed One, the One set up from everlasting. For ever He was the full and personal expression of all the mind and heart of God; and as such He has visited man, to make known in a very real and practical manner what God is. We use words to express what is on our minds and hearts, otherwise they would be invisible; so Christ, the Son of God, the Son of His love, is the Word of God, whereby we may know the thoughts and affections of the eternal God. The mission of Christ to earth was not merely to save sinners from eternal wrath, and to make them happy in heaven, but it was to reveal the Father. Oh that we could effectually, by the Spirit of God, lay hold of this blessed fact! No man hath seen God at any time

but He who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. But how could this Jesus know God, and that which was in His heart and mind more than any other? Jesus was ever with God in close and intimate fellowship, knowing all things. "The Lord possessed me (Wisdom) 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. When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth—when he established the clouds—when he strengthened the fountains of the deep—when he gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandment—when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." (Prov. viii. 22-30.) And not only was Jesus ever with God, but He was *Himself* God—equal with the Father in all respects. On earth He was God manifest in the flesh—the very Jehovah who could and did truly declare Himself to be before Abraham, the "I AM." The Lord grant us a spirit of deep humility and reverence as we look at Jesus, and meditate on Him and some of His many glories. Oh! for divine wisdom and grace while we think of Him who is "THE WORD OF GOD"—the Jehovah on earth made flesh, dwelling a Man among men, sinners, His enemies; come from God a servant to do His will, in making Him known. Oh! may our consideration of Him be such that worship and praise may flow out from our hearts, bowed at a sense of His greatness, and of his infinite love and condescension in taking so lowly a place of humiliation as he did. By Him all things were created, and without Him was not anything made that was made. All things, too, are upheld by the word of His power; and more than this, all things were created for His own glory; and, by-and-bye, when we cast our crowns at His feet, lost in wonder, love, and praise, we shall sing, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. iv. 11.) May, I say, a sense of this great power and greatness bow our hearts in adoration

and worship, and Oh ! may there be such a continual remembrance of His unbounded love in leaving all His glory—in emptying Himself, and taking the form of a servant—to cause us to live in a spirit of constant praise and worship. May, too, the remembrance of the way He was treated when on earth, and the way we have treated Him since we heard of His love, humble us more and more, so that self may never rise into prominence, but ever be judged ; and so judged, that there may be no room for aught else save the exaltation of Christ, and that in every way possible. Well, then, He was Lord and Creator of all, but when He came to His own world which He had created, and which He was upholding by the word of His power, a world which was in every way dependent on Him, it knew Him not. “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, but the world knew him not.” How intensely solemn, how humbling surely ; man has no cause to hold his head up as, alas ! he does in pride and self-exaltation, he has abundant cause to take the low place, and wickedness enough to cause him ever to walk humbly and softly ; but, alas ! the god of this world blinds the minds of them who believe not, and so they see not themselves as they truly are in the sight of God.

Now this first of John presents some of the many glories and perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ. It dates from Eternity to the Millennium, and it must, however, be observed that most of His glories, as set forth in this chapter, are, as we shall see, connected with His first title, “the Word of God,”—the *image* of the invisible God—for the prevailing thought of the chapter is the revelation of God the Father as such. Then there is this other important point, that of all the fulness and perfection in Christ. All we who have believed and been born again have received Him, and grace for grace : so that, as John says in his epistle, “*As Christ is, so are we, in this world.*” (1 John iv. 17.) May the Lord, in His great grace, grant us Divine grace, and wisdom, and sanctification of affection to Himself, and a due reverence of spirit while for a little we consider, according to our measure, these wondrous glories of the Lord Jesus, and our reception of, and part in them ; for of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. It is holy ground. Oh ! may we walk on it with softness, and with the heart guarded with the breastplate of righteousness ; and the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace : and in all may Christ be glorified.

In the first place, then, Christ is presented to us in our chapter as "THE LIFE." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." In the 14th chapter Jesus Himself says, "I am the way, the Truth, and THE LIFE." "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (1 John i. 2.) The life was indeed manifested; but to whom, and where? In a world of death, and to a people sitting in the valley of the shadow of death. To man fallen, and in consequence in a state of continual dying. "In the day thou eatest thereof," said the Lord God to Adam in the garden, "thou shalt die," or more literally, "in dying thou shalt die." The first man, however, did eat, and so died, and brought death on all, and ever since has been in a condition of death. Dead he is, and that in trespasses and in sins; sitting, alas! at perfect ease and complacency in the valley of the shadow of death, unconscious of the fearful condition in which he is, and the ultimate end of such a state. It need scarcely be said that such a one needs life if he is to get to heaven. There it is all life, and He who is the source of life, yea, THE LIFE Himself, is the one centre and object of attraction, so that a dead thing would find no enjoyment in heaven; heaven would be no heaven to such. But, then, how can he obtain life? To beget himself into life is an impossibility, and it is equally impossible to get it by the deeds of law. He is carnal in mind, and he is at enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, and so terribly evil is he that he cannot be subject to it. But if there had been a law which *could have* given life, verily righteousness would have been by law, and there would have been no need for the Son of God to have died. The law could not give life to a dead thing; and not only so, it brought the sentence of death to the conscience of those who were seeking to obtain life under it. Paul says, "I was alive without law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." (Rom vii. 9.) "And the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death, for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." (Rom. vii. 10, 11.) Thus, then, the law has no life to impart to a dead soul. The law is holy, just, and good, and therefore condemns and kills, and makes manifest that which is evil in man. By the commandment sin became exceeding sinful. By the law, then, is the knowledge of sin, but it has no life, no remedy, but



rather the reverse. It condemns, it kills, and it makes the disease, sin, exceeding sinful, so that we must look elsewhere for life and health.

Now, God is the living God, who hath given life and breath to all, and who at the first breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. This, however, as for man, has gone by ; he has sinned and come short of God's glory, and is now dead in trespasses and sins. God is nevertheless the same ; He is still the living God, who only hath immortality and dwelleth in light, to which no man can approach, and whom no man hath seen at any time. (1 Tim. vi. 16.) And as we have said before, it is His purpose to make himself known as the living God to those who are dead to Him, sitting in a state of unconsciousness in the valley of the shadow of death. God is the living God, and Christ is the Word of God, the practical expression of what God is—He is the image of the invisible God. And hence we find Christ in our chapter presented as **THE LIFE**. In Him was life—He is the **LIFE**. This is the record, the blessed record, that God has given unto us eternal life, and this life was in His Son, who by the gospel has brought life and immortality to light. All else is death, and into such a scene, He, the fountain of life, came to impart life to the dead, to quicken them whom He would. (John v. 21.) Man, however, was, alas! dead to this Life; he is quite insensible to its presence. The Life was in this world of death, but alas, there was no response. He was in the world, but the world knew Him not ; He came to His own peculiar people, but they too were so dead they perceived no life, no beauty in Jesus ; they received Him not. However, God would accomplish His own purpose in spite of man's rebellion, and to those whom He will, He puts forth His own sovereign power and begets them. "But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name ; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God*." (John i. 12, 13.) Thus they who believed in Jesus, being born anew of God, received life from the Son of God ; and so do all those who now believe in Jesus ; they receive life in Him. He that believeth on the Son of God *hath* everlasting **LIFE** ; he is made a partaker of the divine nature. (2 Peter i.) Jesus here died on the tree, and having there drank the cup of wrath and put sin

away, having done the will of His Father perfectly; having well done His work, and having vindicated God's justice, God raised Him from the dead, and seated Him on His throne, and crowned Him with glory and honour. By the same power that He thus raised His Son from the dead, God has quickened and raised together with Him all those who believe in Jesus. They who were once dead in trespasses and sins He has made alive with, and in the person of His Christ—THE LIFE. And they who were sitting in the valley of the shadow of death are now seated in Christ—a risen and ascended Christ, created in Him in the heavenlies, and that accomplished by the workmanship of God. How inexpressedly wondrous thus to have been made partakers of the divine nature, to be made as Christ is, though in this world, and thus to have received of His fulness and grace for grace. He came that we dead ones might have life; not only so, but that we might have it more abundantly. Having this life—this divine nature—we can hold close and intimate communion with the living God, our Father, and His Son Jesus Christ. We are no longer at a distance, “afar off,” but in Christ we are “made nigh” through His blood. And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John i. 3.)

In the next place, the Lord Jesus is presented in this blessed portion as THE LIGHT, “that was the TRUE LIGHT,” says John, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The natural man is described in the Scriptures as sitting in darkness, as well as in the shadow of death, under the power of darkness; loving it because his deeds are evil, committing the works of darkness—yea, he is declared to be *darkness* itself. Man is not merely in its range or sphere, but he is the thing itself. “Ye were sometime *darkness*.” (Eph. v. 8.) Sitting in it with all ease and self-satisfaction, careless and indifferent, blinded by Satan, the god of this world, to all its horrors and all its fearful consequences. He is, however, poor and helpless to and in it, having no power whatever to get out of it into the light. The law cannot help him either; it can no more impart light than it could life. The mount burned with darkness. (Deut. iv. 11.) If it did lighten, it was only to give the knowledge of sin, and that sin might appear exceeding sinful, not to give any blessing, for it had none to give. Oh no! the mount of law burned with darkness; it quaked exceedingly, and all the

accompaniments of the law were terribly appalling, causing Moses to cry out, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." (Heb. xii. 21.) But God, who is the living God, "IS LIGHT," dwelling therein. God *is* love; and Jesus, as we have seen, came to manifest God as such. God is also light, and 'tis His purpose to make Himself known as the light as well as love. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the express image of His person. He has come out from God as **THE LIGHT**, and He was that true Light—the *true* light in opposition to all the false lights of this present evil world, as lighted by the Prince of Darkness, to quiet the consciences of those who are sitting in darkness. Not one ray of true light was there, save that which beamed from Him who is the brightness of His glory, the image of Him who is light. As such Jesus came into this world of darkness, to a people who were themselves the personifications of darkness. He shone with heavenly brilliancy, and there radiated from Him on every hand light divine. But, alas! the darkness was so dark, it was so dense, that it might, as it were, be felt. The darkness was so thick it comprehended not the light from heaven. The clouds of sin were so heavy and black that the light shone out in vain—it penetrated not. The people were so blind they could see not so much as a glimmer of light in Him. They saw no beauty to desire Him, though He was indeed chiefest among ten thousand, yea, the *altogether* lovely. What, then, is to be done? Shall God's eternal counsels prove void? Shall the coming of Jesus be in vain? God forbid! But man cannot see—he will not have the light. True, indeed; but God is sovereign, and His own will and purposes He will accomplish in spite of all the rebellion and determination of men to do without God. God, I say, is sovereign, and let men be ever so hardened, ever so dark, God is all-powerful to carry out His own eternal designs. His purpose was to reveal Himself as light, and when the time came for Him to do so, all must give way to Him. Satan and all his agents become as nothing before the power of an Almighty God. Light and love shall prove themselves victorious, and all opposition must cease. Divine Love is such that many waters cannot quench it. Divine Light is such that none can prevail against its penetrating power. The darkness may resist long, but before Almighty Power it must give place. Grace, too, is such that it will triumph over every obstacle; it has triumphed and will continue to

do so. "Grace *reigns* through righteousness." (Rom. v.) Christ, by His death and resurrection, has overcome him who is the Prince of Darkness, and who hath the power of death, that is, the devil. (Heb. ii.) Satan is but a conquered foe, and before God he is altogether powerless. The Lord Jesus has led captivity captive, and He is conqueror o'er the grave, and sin, and death, and hell, and Satan; and now the believer in Jesus is delivered by Him from the power of darkness, and is translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Once he was in it, but now he has been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light; and thus, being in the region of the light, he is illuminated (Heb. x.); and so becomes a light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Our Scripture, however, goes further, and tells us that Christ is the light, and of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. Not only, then, are we illuminated ones, by being brought into the presence of the light, and by being lighted upon; but we are ourselves made part of the light itself, for of His fulness have we received. Hence we find in Eph. v., "Ye who were sometime in darkness *are light* in the Lord." Once we were darkness itself; now being in the Lord, we are light itself. Christ, the Life and the Light has been formed in those who believe by the power and workmanship of God, "created in Christ Jesus." Having thus followed Him who is the light of the world, we have received of His fulness the light of life, and thus being in Christ, and Christ in us, we are light in the Lord; no longer sitting in darkness, but sitting in Him, the light in the heavenlies; being in this present world strangers and pilgrims, shining as lights therein, glorifying Him who hath done such wondrous things for us. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.) From this we may learn the fearful extent of man's natural darkness. In the beginning, when God created the world, He had but to command the light to shine,—He had but to say, "Let there be light," and "There was light" at once, and the darkness was dissipated. Not so, however, with man. It seems that it was not enough for God to command the light to shine in him, but the darkness was so thick and dark that it needed that He should work in us, and by His operation shine the light in us. Oh, man's natural state is indeed most terrible!

By grace, then, God has shined into the hearts of those who believe, and made them to receive of His fulness, even the light, and so "as Christ is, so are they in this world."

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

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## A CHAPTER FROM MY EXPERIENCE.

God made the death of a much-loved friend instrumental in awakening the conscience of the writer to godly and earnest concern.

For the first time in his life he had solemnly proposed to himself the vital question—"What must *I* do to be saved?" The soul, thoroughly in earnest, at once commenced *doing*. Eternal life, peace of mind, and present forgiveness of sins were believed to depend upon much *being felt*, much *realised*; and for this purpose, viz., that convictions of sin might be deepened, that the anxiety of his soul might be increased, he cried, night and day, "Lord, show me *my* sin, *my* vileness, *my* ruin. O Lord, make me feel that I'm a sinner, *needing* and *deserving* hell! Lord, save me!" It was a solemn time. Friend after friend pointed him to the Lamb of God—who was made an offering for sin—who made peace through the blood of His cross—and, founded upon His *finished* work, from the throne of God in glory, presses upon every soul the message of reconciliation, "Be ye reconciled." It was all in vain. His distress increased with the fervour and urgency of his prayers.

Weeks and months rolled on, and found him still a stranger to the peace which passeth *all* understanding. And no wonder, for vainly imagining that he had to make his peace with God, and that the ground of that peace must be laid in the shedding of many tears, agonizing emotions, stirring and deep conviction of sin, as one might expect, he was labouring at the task with all the fervour and resolute determination of one on whose *doing* depended eternal life and peace with God.

"God will have mercy upon me," he said to a friend on one occasion, "God will save me, but not now." "I don't feel enough, I don't half realize my condition as a guilty sinner. I must cherish my convictions, I must feel more. I must grieve over my sins more, I must weep more." And again he gave himself to the sad, sad task of propitiating

God. Alas! how vain. The peace of a sinner in the presence of the Holy God has absolutely nothing to do with his prayers, tears, and soul troubles. The foundation of an *immediate* and *perfect* forgiveness of sins—the clearance of all guilt—the removal of all iniquity—has not the slightest reference as to his moral condition. He may be an awakened sinner, feeling the burden of his guilt, groaning under the weight of his sins; or he may still be, what is worse, yet unconcerned and unconverted.

The sinner is “made nigh to God,” not by his tears of repentance—his bitter sorrowings for sin—but by the “BLOOD OF CHRIST.” The peace of a sinner is not founded upon his feelings—be they good or bad, or upon his faith—be it weak or strong, or upon his experiences or realizations. No, no. The blood of the cross *has* made peace—the blood alone—the finished work of Christ, the dying, dead, buried, risen, and glorified Son of God, has *obtained redemption*—for whom? For sinners—for poor lost, hell-worthy sinners, be they good or bad, whether feeling or “past feeling.” A lifted-up Christ is God’s remedy for sinners; the cross His answer to the ruin, sin, and guilt of man. Has my reader believed in Christ? Has he got eternal life in the Son of God? Have you, dear reader, yet gazed upon Christ in glory? Have your eyes been rivetted upon His side, His hands, His feet? “Why look there?” you say. Why? Because that once wounded *Man* is in glory. He fills the throne of God. The Son of Man lifted up on the cross—the atoning victim for sin—has accomplished His work. He has made an end of sin. The victim’s blood has been shed—His life laid down—justice thereby satisfied, and the throne of God divinely vindicated. “But,” you say, “it was against God I had sinned, against Him I had transgressed—is He satisfied!—is He well pleased?” Yes, sinner, He is, and the proof is the empty grave—the tenantless tomb. The Son of God has been raised from the tomb, by the glory and power of God, and now fills the highest point in the universe—the throne of God.

This truth, which, when believed, carries salvation with it, was put, simply and earnestly, before G—F— He was pressed with that Scripture, that all his righteousness were as filthy rags, *i.e.*, human goodness of any kind; that divine righteousness, perfect peace, instant salvation, and

eternal life, were each, alone, and entirely grounded upon Christ in death and resurrection; that *no other* foundation can man lay than that *is* laid, even Jesus Christ, the Lord; that any foundation to build for eternity, which had even a grain of human composition in it, would prove a foundation—a standing—weaker than the sinking sea-shore sand; that salvation was in NONE OTHER. “I see it,” said the young man, “I see it now—I’m saved by the blood of the Lamb—I’m saved by the blood of Jesus—Hallelujah to His name!” Years have rolled on, and yet that happy one is happy still, that rejoicing one is rejoicing still. Why? Because the blood of Christ is ever the same. Why? Because the throne of God is still filled by the risen Christ. Why? Because, a full salvation is his portion, a full and perfect salvation enjoyed even *now*. Why? Because this One who died is coming—yes, coming—to his everlasting joy—to his eternal blessing—to take him to his Father’s home—to the rest of heaven. Yes, Jesus is coming. “How soon?” do you ask. “Quickly,” is the divine answer. And when He comes, loud, long, and eternal shall be the song resounding from every blood-washed soul—“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!” Amen and Amen. F.

## KEEPING HIS WORDS.

JOHN xiv.

I THINK I can say, I love a personal breathing after Jesus, and the consciousness of His nearness to us. If we did but ponder it duly, what a precious mystery it would be in our esteem, that before we go to His place to be with Him, He comes to our place to be with us. The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, has come, and now dwells in us, manifesting the Father and the Son—and soon we shall go to the Lord to dwell with Him, and see Him as He is. And this is more than visiting; it is dwelling and abiding—He with us now—we with Him ere long—and both of these dwellings or abidings are declared to be “for ever.”

These manifestations of the Father and the Son, through the Spirit, are but poorly enjoyed by us, if one may speak for others. We want a *closer* dealing of the soul with Christ. A more real, vivid, personal communion. The enjoyment of

these manifestations, the Lord connects with a *keeping of His words* (John xiv. 21-23), and I think I have seen *that* in some souls. For there is a generation of true, fervent, simple spirits, who greatly outrun the most of us. It is not that they are so much in the *study of the Bible*. No; it is not that. But they have *His words* stored up in the memory of their hearts, and they draw them thence for varied, living, affectionate use through the day. They know Christ, and in a way far beyond what the constant mere study of the Bible would give them. Indeed, such study, if alone, is not in the divine sense a keeping of *His words*; and has no manifest action of Him accompanying it. And, again, this having of the words of Christ, is something beyond the *obeying of precepts*.

These words or sayings (see John xiv. 23, 24) may be and more properly are, *revelations of Himself*, than *enunciations of His will*. More telling us what *He is*—than what *we ought to be*.

A proof that the disciples were wanting in this comes out in the same chapter, John xiv. The Lord had been telling them of His going away. Had they heard Him as they should, they would have kept this saying of His, and they would have rejoiced, (verse 28.) Even among ourselves, we may say, this keeping of sayings or words is the proof of love. It tells another that *He is in the memory of our hearts*.

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## LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, FOR YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH.

LUKE xxi. 28.

Lift up your heads ! ye drooping ones—

Sorrow and night are nearly spent.

Sleepers awake ! Ye slumberers, arise !

And you, ye patient, waiting ones,

Lift up your eyes !

For watchers on the hill-tops see

Visions supremely fair,

And notes of heaven's own melody

Are wafted to them there.

See ye no tokens of the coming morn ?

The breaking of that glorious day,

When sin, with all its deep dark stain,

For aye shall pass away ?

Oh ! let us not be weary,

Though all around be dreary ;



Though for a while thick darkness like a pall  
Over the world should fall.

When fierce the battle strife shall rage,  
O Lord, for us do thou engage :  
When Satan wields the death blows of his power,  
Spirit of Truth, be with us in that hour.

Divinely strengthened, let the Church now stand  
Firm against every foe, a compact band ;  
Each warrior girded be—assured of victory ;  
Others with sandalled feet,  
Waiting the summons their dear Lord to meet.

Behold, He draweth near !  
Ah ! where will now the careless ones appear ?  
Whither will unbelievers flee ?  
Where will the scoffer and blasphemer be ?  
The lengthened day of grace will soon be o'er,  
When mercy's tender pleadings  
*Shall be heard NO MORE !*

Joy, joy to all believing ones !  
It is the Lord—He comes, He comes !  
Christ once denied—"The Crucified."  
He who for us was slain,  
Returns a Conquerer, crowned,  
With all His faithful "found,"  
Triumphantly to reign.

O grave ! thy well-kept trust is there no more ;  
That thrilling sound to thee must be—  
Give up *His dead*—Restore ! Restore !  
Clearer, transforming, and intenselier bright,  
Nearer and nearer beams the Living Light ;  
Till faith and hope are perfected in sight.  
Here conflicts cease—  
Armour and weapons are laid down  
To take up the Crown ;  
All, all is peace !

*Earth*, once again in youthful prime,  
Now owns her rightful King.  
And beast and bird, and herb and flower,  
Spontaneous tribute bring.

*On high*, the ransomed myriads raise  
Hosannahs to their Saviour's praise ;  
Mountains and vales the sounds prolong,  
Till universal is the song :  
And angel choirs attent above,  
Join in full chorus—"God is Love."

The Bride's long-absent Lord is come,  
Jerusalem on high her blissful home !

## GRACE FOR SINNERS.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—JOHN iii. 16.

THESE, dear reader, are very plain simple words, and they contain the whole story of the grace of God to poor sinners. Words cannot express the depth of that grace and love; neither can the carnal mind, which is enmity against God (Rom. viii. 7), enter into it. But so it is, “God so loved” the sinner—one who had, by his own act, and the unbelief of his heart, brought that fearful thing, sin, into the world, (Gen. iii)—He so loved him, that He spared not His only Son, that He might with justice bring those sinners, who had departed from Him in rebellion and sin, back to Himself. And oh! what precious infinite love and grace is here set forth. He spared not His Son—His only Son, who had lain in his bosom from all eternity, was given for the sinner, for those who did not care about Him.

We may well pause and wonder at such love, but it is as true and as perfect as that God from whom it came forth; it is worthy of Him, indeed. Blessed be His Name for ever! For what purpose did God not spare His only Son? That *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but *have* everlasting life. Well, if this does not fill up the measure of that love, nothing can.

Oh! what a plain, simple, but glorious truth is contained in those words. No condition—nothing to be added thereto—nothing to be taken therefrom. It is only necessary to feel and know that one is a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins—the more broken-hearted about it the better—to have a sure and unfailing title to the virtue of the Scripture at the beginning of this paper. To be conscious that such never can do anything towards their own salvation, and to receive God’s own true and gracious words as perfect and sufficient. To accept of the living and true Saviour, here provided, to meet every need. And mark, it is a Saviour of God’s own providing, to meet the sinner’s need. None other would have satisfied him—none other would have been accepted of God.

Why not, then, dear reader, at this very moment flee to this blessed Jesus, this dear Redeemer, and believe on Him? *He* is all that you need in God’s sight. He has promised that “*whosoever* cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast

out"—that He will "*never leave nor forsake*" those who do but trust in Him for their all.

I think I hear you saying that you are too great a sinner. Oh! do not trifle thus, I beseech you. It was for such, or worse, if there could be such, that He came and died. He came to save "*that which was lost.*" None of us know how soon it may please the Almighty God with whom are the issues of life and death, to call either of us away out of this world. Oh! then, do not delay, but accept Him now, in this the day of His salvation and wondrous grace to sinners. There are but two ways in which you must appear before God. Clothed in Christ as your righteousness, an inheritor, through Him, of everlasting glory; or, clothed in your sins, and an inheritor of eternal damnation! Awful words! But so it is—either one or the other is your lot. There is no middle place.

Oh! dear reader, you may say, "I have heard all this over and over again." But if you have not a vital interest in these glorious truths, may God soften your heart, and give you to believe them, by the teaching of His gracious Spirit. Accept, I do pray you, this glorious Gospel, or good news, of God's full, free, *unconditional* salvation for poor sinners, by the "*blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin.*" Do not let unbelief reign any longer in your heart. I believe this sin will be that which will meet the direst punishment, for from it spring up all other sins: it is the root of them all.

"When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in *flaming fire*, taking vengeance on them that knew not God"—mark, it is on them, also, "*that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who shall be punished with *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." (2 Thess. i. 7-9.)

Let me again repeat this glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. "*Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*" Oh! what a fearful looking for of judgment for those who will not accept of this message of grace. Accept it, then, I beseech you, reader, now. Do not go away, or cast it from you, for "*now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*" Flee to Jesus this very moment, if you have not already done so. Believe on Him, and trust Him for your all. Nothing is wanting in Him. The more you trust in Him, the more you will find in Him,

and the more perfect peace you will have for your own soul. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God the Father, who sent Him into the world to save sinners, is to have eternal life; and to set to your seal that God is true, and to know that His most precious blood, which was shed for you, cleanseth you from all sin—mark, dear reader, it is from *all* sin; not one jot or tittle of sin is on those who are washed in that precious blood, before God. It is not the value which *you* put on this blood; it is the value and efficacy that *God* sees in it which constitutes your safety.

May that God, who is rich in mercy, teach you to accept and know all these precious truths for your own soul, by His Holy Spirit. He alone can bless these words to your soul. And to Him be all the honour, and praise, and glory, now and for ever, through Jesus Christ. Amen. G.S.P.

## AS CHRIST IS, SO ARE WE: OR, THE CHRISTIAN'S RECEPTION OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

Read JOHN i.

(*Continued from page 177.*)

IN the third place, our Scripture presents this blessed Person as One who is full of grace and truth. "The Law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (v. 17.) This, too, is connected with His title, the "Word of God." For as such He is the image of the invisible God, the express image of the Person of Him who is love, the God of all grace, whose purpose was to make Himself known as such. His purpose, moreover, was to display it to the full, for those who are saved in this day of grace have been predestinated to the praise of the *glory* of His grace. The question arises then—How is this to be accomplished? And where are they who are so bad that He can show forth all His grace, and reveal Himself in a practical manner, as love, according to His own fulness and perfection? The vilest of the vile, the poorest of the poor, the emptiest of the empty He seeks, in order to pour into them a full and unlimited measure of His love, which now through Christ knows no let.

The law displayed no grace. It could not do so, for law and grace are opposite. The law demanded strict obedience

to all its requirements, it admitted of no compromise. It demanded from man what he could not give, and it gave not power whereby to fulfil its demands. Man is dead by nature, and the law required from such that which only a living man could do. The law gives no life, but, on the contrary, it kills. The law then failed to produce holiness in man; it brought out his evil nature in bolder relief. By Jesus Christ, however, grace and truth came in contrast to the law; He came to manifest God's favour, and to make known God, who is love, the God of all grace. Grace looks for a higher walk than the law ever did; but then grace gives a nature and power, a life whereby the recipient can keep the law. By nature he is dead, under condemnation, but by grace he is alive in Christ to God, "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set him free from the law of sin and death," in order that the righteousness of the law, in all its integrity, might be fulfilled *in* such, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. The law made the offence abound, and sin exceeding sinful; but grace has put all away, and makes those who are washed in the blood of Christ "as white as snow," "clean every whit." Thus Jesus, full of grace and truth, came to save the poor, ruined, helpless sinner. His joy was to receive publicans and sinners, and to eat with them. Grace has nothing for the self-righteous. It does not suit such; they do not need it. It is only the poor sinner who can value grace, and it is that which will alone suit his need. And now by means of the cross, which met the claims of God's righteousness, He is able to pour out with full and unlimited measure His love and His grace. And now that the victory is won over all enemies, His work well done, and righteousness completed, God delights to manifest Himself as love to the chief of sinners, and blesses such *fully* and freely. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." (1 Tim. i. 15, 16.) God is, as has been so often already said, love, and nothing but a full revelation of *Himself* will satisfy *Him*. This was His purpose, and He will carry it out. Hence we find that, on the ascension and glorification of Christ to the right hand of the majesty on high, having received

the promise of the Father, He sent forth the Holy Ghost to take up His abode no longer in temples made with hands, but in the bodies of those who have been saved by grace, and to be to, and with them an *abiding* Comforter; and the promise is, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Where sin hath abounded grace did much more abound, and God is now revealed in Christ. Those who believe He could not make more perfect than He has done, He has made them as white as snow, though their sins were as scarlet. By His own power and workmanship He has made them "a new creation" in Christ, so that as Christ is so are they in this world. Not only so, but He has blessed them to the full, for He has given the Holy Ghost to dwell in them, and all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Thus, I say, God has proved and showed Himself to be love, and that in the most practical way. A higher and better position He could not have given, or make us more perfect than He has He could not. To give us a richer portion than He has were impossible, for He could not make us more perfect than Christ. He could not give us more than "all things." And, more than all, He could not have brought us into a better association; for oh! the wonders of His grace, He has brought us to have and enjoy fellowship with Himself. Would that we *abode* in such communion by the power of the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us! From all eternity, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, we have been predestinated to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Has He not been displaying it in all its fulness and glory? He could do no more than He has done. We are, alas! such fools, and so slow of heart to believe all that He has told us, and has done for and to us. The Holy Ghost, is, however, but the earnest of that which is to come, for by-and-bye this grace will be more fully manifested when the Lord Jesus comes and takes us all away. When He will conduct us to the Father's house, where He has prepared a place for us in glory, and then He will, to the profound astonishment of the countless myriads of the heavenly host, show "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" our Lord. Then shall we be with Him, and see Him face to face, and know Him even as we are known by Him. 'Tis true, and He has fully proved in all His ways and acts towards us, that "God is love," the "God of all grace." 'Tis true Jesus has come, the image of the invisible God, full of

grace and truth; and it is also true that “of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” We have received of His saving grace, His restoring grace; His restraining, His constraining, His sympathizing, His saving grace; yea, we have received of all the various aspects of His grace, for of His fulness have we received.

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

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## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, AS PRESENTED IN THE PAR- ABLES IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

### No. 4.

HERE, in xiii. chapter, a new scene opens before us, and the new thing which was ever present with the Lord, and which was the eternal purpose of God, now commences. The Lord proceeds to give an account or description of His work under the similitude of a Sower sowing good seed. There is no more heralding the advent of the kingdom. Jesus no longer presents Himself as the Messiah; but now, on an entirely new principle, He manifests the grace of God.

Up to this time God had patiently waited for the performance of these righteous demands He had upon Israel, which had their foundation not only in that He was Creator and Giver of all good—the Gentiles in this respect owed obedience as well as Israel, but there was the additional claim peculiar to Israel. God was their King, and had made Himself known to them as such. And He had taken special care of them, a special interest in them, and had done for them all that could be done. But it was all in vain. The more they were blessed in outward privilege, the more they sinned and rebelled against Jehovah. All the fruit that the vine, on which God had bestowed so much care and attention, ever brought forth, was wild grapes.

The Lord God was merciful and gracious, while visiting the sins of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation, and showing mercy to thousands of them that feared Him. Now His grace takes an unlimited form, is unconditional, seeks for nothing in man, looks not for worthy persons, but His grace is unto all without distinction. The Sower scatters his seed upon the earth, as well upon the stony or thorny,

as upon the good. The grace of God, the new dealing of God with man, would be not the enforcing of His just demands, even though merciful and gracious, but, on the contrary, God giving to man everything from the pure sovereign grace of His own heart. That is, the old thing and the new thing are essentially different.

In reality, the Lord was preparing the way for the sowing of the seed from the first. The whole history, as given by Matthew in the previous chapters, could have no other termination than chapter xiii. gives. As we have seen, from the first indication of rejection, the kingdom was presented in a different way.

At first it was the privilege of the Jew by birth, then that was set aside through their carnality and fleshy apprehension of it, and the kingdom was shown to be elective, and to entail suffering and oppression upon the heirs. And now it was altogether a new thing, and the very purpose for which the Lord came into the world, stands out clear and distinct. It is our privilege to see, in some degree, the wisdom of God in delaying the announcement, that it was an entirely new thing the Lord was about to do, until His rejection as Messiah, and His consequent break with the nation, was an accomplished fact.

Now Jesus tells openly to the multitude the character of His mission, and how it would be received. In fact, He speaks of His work while here on the earth, the effect of it upon man, where the good seed took permanent root, and the condition of those who, in any case, brought not forth good fruit; then, in a series of prophetic parables, what would become of the kingdom He was about to establish, and what would be the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven.

The first parable in xiii. chapter is not illustrative of the kingdom, but the preparatory work necessary for its establishment. While it was a mere question of birthright, no such work was needed. But when Israel, like Esau of old, sold their birthright, every thing was changed; and if the Lord was to have a kingdom at all here below, it was necessary to begin from a fresh point, and on altogether a new principle. We say *necessary*. But it was the necessity of Divine grace, of His boundless love. It was Love that sent, Love that came, Love that died. It is Love supreme, Love that now calls sinners, and applies the precious blood to the guilty and stained conscience, purges it, and gives



the believer a title to stand free of all accusation in the presence of Light.

The parable of the Sower is the preaching of the *Word*, to which Israel, as a nation, is judicially deaf. This is different from the preaching of the kingdom, in the former chapters. The preaching of the kingdom, is to a nation owned of God, but rebellious, and calling upon them to repent, in view of the blessing and glory of the coming kingdom. The preaching of the word, is God proclaiming grace to every one without distinction of condition, or state, or character.

The six following parables do not apply to the time of our Lord's sojourn here, but to the time after His going away, and before His return in power and glory. Then the mysteries of the kingdom will cease, and the authority of the King will be enforced in all the world. Now it is moral, and spiritually appreciated and submitted to only by faith. Then power will be in exercise, and his authority will make itself felt and feared. His first act will be the slaying of those who said they would not have the man Christ Jesus to reign over them.

Here, in this chapter, for the first time, we have the expression, "Mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." It would assume a form unknown to prophecy. The prophets fully described Messiah as a rejected one, and that He would be put to death; but not the peculiar and exceptional form His kingdom would take consequent upon His rejection. They depict the sufferings and future glory of the Messiah. The Jewish remnant, suffering, then triumphant, and the Gentiles receiving blessing through them. Christ, the Messiah, reigning over all. But the mysteries of the time of the suffering, (when God would accomplish His hidden purpose, never revealed to any prophet, of calling out from Jew and Gentile, and forming His church,) are for the first time found here. The abnormal state of the kingdom, the fearful prevalence of evil, and yet the existence of a small but highly prized remnant are given; but only now in parable. The instructed eye may discern the Church in the treasure, and the pearl. But all that we read of, are the similitudes of the kingdom of heaven. For it was not necessary in the wisdom of the Holy Ghost to delineate the Church in its higher and more special character, but this which was common to it and the kingdom, then about to be set up.

The earthly kingdom, the subject of prophecy, is for the

present, in abeyance. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, in their description of the Messiah's reign, picture to us the earthly scene of His glory. Isaiah gives the moral picture in xi. and xii. chapters. Ezekiel in the latter chapters of his prophecy gives the ecclesiastical, or the metropolitan relations of Jerusalem, the name of which will be, "The Lord is there." Daniel gives the external relation, the Gentile powers, all that remain of them (the toes of the image) is broken and destroyed. One might call this the *political* aspect. But all this, for the present, is postponed. Meantime heirs are gathered for heavenly glory.

"A sower went forth to sow, &c." This is now the work of Jesus. He has the seed. He scatters it on the earth all around Him. There is no looking for the best land, or most fertile spot. The grace of God is "unto all." This seed is called the word of the kingdom. The parable simply gives us facts. Good seed was sown. Some fell by the way side, and the birds picked it up. Some fell on stony ground, it soon sprung up, and as soon withered, there being no depth of earth, the sun soon scorched and dried it up. Some fell upon ground filled with thorns, and the good seed was choked. Some again fell upon good ground, and here alone became fruitful. It is not a question here as to *why* men are likened to this or that, but merely such is the fact. The way in which the *word* would be received by different classes of men is beautifully, and, of course, truly set forth by these similitudes. The ground cannot be intended to give the natural condition of men, for then we should have *good* men before they received the word, which is solemnly denied by the word of God. No, we repeat it is simply the fact that seed was sown, and in one case it was productive, when men received the word, and were newly-born by it, it was like good seed sown in good ground, there was fruit. But the Lord explains His own parable. And we have only to look around us now to see instances—alas! how many—of the same things.

We learn from the word of God, that there are three great enemies which oppose the true reception of the word into the heart. And in every case where the word when heard is unproductive of good fruit, the cause is sure to be found in one of these three. They are the devil, the flesh, and the world. Of course, there may be differences in the development of the opposition manifested in different individuals,

but the source of every failure in producing good fruit, is traceable to one or other of the antagonistic principles. So here. The Lord tells us that the birds are the wicked ones, "when any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he that received seed by the way side." No case more desperate than this. None so far, apparently, removed from the life-giving power of the word. No apprehension, no feeling, no understanding, like the beasts that perish, the complete stupor of death, the complete dominion of the devil. Now when we see individuals who come time after time, and regularly hear the gospel, and go away again as careless and as unconcerned as before, need we ask, who it is that so enthrals them? who it is that has made their hearts and consciences hard and impenetrable like the ground that is constantly trodden upon, so that the seed lies on the surface? They hear the word, and instantly forget. The devil catcheth away the seed sown. How little such are aware who it is that is so indefatigable. Not a single grain does he leave. Oh! if such a one reads these words, let him awake to the awful condition in which he is. There is one who is stronger, and who can deliver him from the power of the evil one.

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

## "O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO SHALL DELIVER ME?"

ROMANS vii.

How often do we find a soul in the state which is in the Apostles' mind in the closing verses of Rom. vii? And how often is it judged to be the proper healthy state in which a soul should be? To be sure the deep work which we find there is most useful to be learned in the conscience, but we should ever remember that it is not proper *Christian* experience at all. It is plain enough that the soul there is *awakened* to the sense, more or less deeply, of what it is in God's sight, and even this is blessed. It is so blessed to see consciences searched to the very deepest depths by whatever means the Lord uses to this end. There never is a true work of God done in the soul till this is so. Many and many a "stony ground" hearer has had a thorough intellectual

knowledge of the Gospel, without a single bit of conscience, or life towards God. What a solemn truth for many a heart. May such be led to see to it that they have more than an intellectual interest in the Gospel of God's grace. Many a soul who has had views of the salvation of God in the Gospel, as clear and as correct as might be, will be found as those of whom the Lord Jesus says, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

This is not the case, however, in Rom. vii. There it is the feelings of a conscience which is thoroughly searched and awakened, but miserable. Occupied entirely with self, and the claims of the law upon a man alive in the flesh, and responsible before God, and not possessing any knowledge of Christ as a *Saviour*, or enjoying the Spirit of adoption. It is not the state of a *dead* sinner, but of a *quickened* soul before deliverance, groaning under the sense of the *nature of sin* within it, which is so twisted round the heart, that when it would do good, evil only is present with it.

Just picture a friend, on a bed of sickness, groaning and writhing in pain. Well, you say, "He is not dead—he is alive; but that is a poor way of showing that he is alive." So with the soul here, it is not dead. It is alive; but if alive, it should be happy to be in health: and not be showing that it is alive in such a miserable way as this.

There is an order, too, in the discovery of self which we find here. For it is really the discovery of a *nature*, which the soul makes. It is not the *fruits* of that nature, or the *sins* which have come from the root within. It is the *nature* and *principle*—the *root* of sin, which we find twisted round the heart, desolating it under the thought that, while I would desire to do the good, and delight to do it, I am unable to do it, for sin is present with me. But what happiness to discover even so far as we find in verse 17, that "it is no more *I* that do it, but *sin* that dwelleth in me." That I *have* a nature apart from, and wholly distinct from the sinful principle which I find wrought into my very heart's core. A nature which consents to the law that it is good, and hates the evil of which the other nature alone is capable. This is the first step of the soul here, but a step that is on the way to better things. How blessed for a soul that has been writhing under the sense of its own sinfulness, to make this discovery. To find out that what I thought was myself, was in truth only the workings of a bad, and hopelessly bad

nature, which the possession of a good nature only brought to light. Blessed to discover that I *have* a better nature, which has a desire to do the right, even though I find that it has no power over the workings of the old.

But if I have made this discovery of two *natures*, I must find out something more. I discover that even this new nature has got *no power* to combat with, and contend with, the evil and bad nature. And that while "to will is present with me, how to perform that which is good I find not." That even when with heart and soul I would do good, evil is present with me. That the law, or tendency, of the bad nature, "brings me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." I have discovered a new nature, but oh, desolating discovery, *it has got no power*—it cannot struggle successfully against the evil nature to which I am a captive. What then am I to do? Ah, there is the secret out! You want to do! You want to get victory and peace by *progress* over this bad nature, and thus be delivered. Well, you *never will* get peace thus. If you did, you would be congratulating yourself for the victory. "What then must I learn?" you would say. "I have learned that I have got *two natures*. I have learned that the good nature has got *no power* in itself. What is now to be done?" "I am a wretched man, WHO SHALL DELIVER ME?" Ah, yes, now you have come to the *end of yourself*: you don't ask now "what shall I do?" You have discovered that you can do nothing—that you must have some one else to come in and deliver you—that you cannot deliver yourself. You have been like one floundering about in a quagmire—every plunge for deliverance only putting you deeper, instead of getting you out. You have now come to the end of your strength—the end of yourself; and to the conclusion when there, that you cannot deliver yourself—that you must have another to deliver you. Blessed discovery. When the soul is driven, as it were, to the cry, "O, wretched man that I am! *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*"—It is not now, What shall I do? but the cry of a soul that has come to the consciousness that it can *do nothing* to get free, and that it must have another to do for it—another to deliver! *And the moment the soul is there it discovers the soul-emancipating truth that all is done*; and already it is thanking God for deliverance, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Yes, it has found that it was *when we were without strength, in due*

time, when this had been thoroughly proved, Christ died for the ungodly—that He had been down in the very depths in sinbearing and judgment on account of sin—that what the law could not do, *i.e.*, give deliverance, or bring to God. God has done. How? He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, a sacrifice for sin; and He *condemned sin in the flesh!* *condemned* what He could not *pardon*, *i.e.*, the *nature* of sin which was twisted and knotted round the heart of the groaner of Rom. vii. 24; and now, instead of the law of sin in his members, bringing him into captivity, it is the law of the spirit of life (in resurrection) in Christ Jesus, has made him free from the law of sin and death.

The deliverance is complete, and he is thanking God through Jesus Christ. But the natures remain and their tendencies are unaltered—this he learns in verse 25. "So, then, with the mind, (the new nature which he alone acknowledges as *himself*) I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Not that he *does* serve it, but the characteristic tendencies of each are discovered; and he only speaks of "the flesh" as an evil thing to be treated as an enemy, and overcome.

It is remarkable that when the soul is in this state before the knowledge of deliverance, that it is all *self*—I, I, I—which occupies him. The passage shows us the soul under the breaking-up process under law, or the pressure of God's claims upon a *man in himself*, still looking upon itself as a man alive in the flesh. This condition the apostle looks upon as a bygone thing to the Christian in ver. 5, "When we were in the flesh," that is, when we were alive as children of Adam, and responsible in such a state to God. But the Christian is dead. He has died to, and from under, the law, by the body of Christ. Having died to that wherein he was held, (v. 6, read margin, which is correct,) in coming into a new state in Christ risen from the dead, he might be to another, even to Christ risen from the dead, and thus, and thus only, bring forth fruit unto God. He is not now in the flesh—it is a bygone state. "When we were in the flesh." Just as we would say, "When we *were* in such or such a place, in which we are not now." He is now in the Spirit. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit." (Ch. viii. 9.) Ver. 1-11 of ch. viii. is the answer, in deliverance, to the cry, "Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" and it goes on, as v. 11 shows, even to the deliverance of the body, or

the dust of the saints, which is raised because of the Spirit of God having dwelt in their bodies. And in treating of this deliverance, notices by the way the natures concerned in it—the carnal mind and the spiritual mind.

The great secret of our Christian position is, that we are not alive "in the flesh" at all. The death and blood-shedding of Christ has met our whole condition as sinners, whether as regards the *nature* of sin which is in us, or the *fruits* of that nature—sins, and has put it away. But He was *not only* thus delivered for our offences—He was *also* raised up from the dead. God raised Him up from the dead, after He was perfectly glorified by Christ on the cross, as to sin. Every moral character of God was exhibited there. God then comes in and raises Him up from among the dead, and brings Him into a *new* place in resurrection, and the believer, whose case as a sinner was met in the death of Christ, passes by faith into a *new place* in Christ risen. Thus, as dead with Christ, he is discharged or freed, as is Christ Himself, from sin. His business then is to reckon himself dead. To act upon this, and to count himself alive unto God in Christ risen from the dead. Thus he gets power over sin, over Satan's power, who only can deal with the old nature. The law has lost its claim over him too. It applied to his fallen nature, and to it only. It forbade the lusts of a heart which had departed from God. By the law was the knowledge of sin. It pursued its claims upon him, as a man alive in the flesh, as far as the cross; then, having died with Christ, it can pursue him no farther. He has become dead to the law by the body of Christ. He has been delivered from the law, having died to that wherein he was held. Therefore, when the apostle comes to Rom. viii. 1, he sees the Christian in a new place—in Christ. Therefore, he says there is no condemnation for those who are there. How could there be? Christ has been in death and sin-bearing, had fully met the judgment of God on sin and sins. The wrath of God had discharged itself fully upon His head—the justice of God had been satisfied. He had come forth out of that place in resurrection—how, then, could there be any condemnation to those who are in Him? They are in a new place, to which these things do not belong. The law of the spirit of life in Him hath set them free from that which, as children of the first Adam, fallen and estranged from God, they had been subjected—even from the law of

sin and death. For what the law could not do—it could condemn the sin, but without delivering the sinner. It could, and it did, discover the sin, and prohibit it—and, finding it there, it could and did *establish the distance* between God and the sinner—but it could not give life, or bring to God—well, what the *law* could not do, *God* has done. He has sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin. He has condemned the nature that could not be pardoned, *i.e.*, “Sin in the flesh.” I forgive my child for its faults, but I do not forgive the nature from which it came. So with God—He forgives the *sins*, but not the *nature* from which they came. So He *condemns* what He could not pardon. Thus the holy requirements of the law, its righteousness, are fulfilled *in* us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; never by being under it. And thus God has brought us to Himself in Christ.

The conflict, or breaking-up process, of Rom. vii. is that of the flesh under law. There is no knowledge of Christ as a Deliverer, a Saviour, known in the soul as such; and the Spirit of Christ is not there. It has been confounded with the conflict of Gal. v. 17, and wrongly. There, it is the conflict between the flesh and the spirit which goes on. And there we find, “If we walk in the Spirit, we shall *not* fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” And, “If we are led of the Spirit, we are *not* under law” at all. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye *may* not (this is the force) do the things that ye would.” The whole context and teaching of the passage shows that living and walking in the Spirit, which is the proper Christian state, enables us to overcome the workings of the flesh, and walk in the liberty of grace. Therefore, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. No more the groanings of a soul under bondage, but entire and perfect liberty. A liberty for the new man to live unto God.—Ed.

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## THE BURNT OFFERING.

LEV. i. 1-9.

ATONEMENT hath been made,  
 “The bullock” hath been slain;  
 Before the Lord its parts are laid,  
 Nor speak they there in vain,



Unblemished, willing, pure,  
 My hand is on its head;  
 And making mine acceptance sure,  
 Its costly blood is shed.

The brazen altar smokes  
 With incense sweet and rare;  
 Rich odours that the flame evokes  
 Arise and fill the air.

Behold! Jehovah feasts!  
 Draw near to view the sight!  
 Surround the altar, O ye priests,  
 Where God hath His delight!

The savour to the LORD  
 Hath all His soul possessed;  
 Jehovah hath His own reward,  
 The offerer hath rest.

“Behold, my God, I come!  
 I joy to do thy will!”  
 That voice strikes every rebel dumb,  
 That music echoes still!

O Christ of God! do Thou  
 Thyself to us declare,  
 So shall we still in worship bow,  
 Till praise hath silenced prayer.

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

In reply to a communication from “Elo,” London:—

There is no subject in Scripture which demands more an exercised heart and a worshipping and adoring spirit, than that of which you have written. It is not a subject for a cold, heartless, doctrinal analysis, but one for a heart which has had grace given to see something of the deep need of the soul for what Christ passed through on His cross; and who, with a chastened and reverential spirit, would seek to learn the meaning in some measure, if it could not learn it in its depths, of that unparalleled moment, which, once passed through, *could* not be repeated.

With such a state of soul, much can be, through grace, learned; and I believe the more the soul understands what passed on the cross, the more solid will be the peace which flows from it. With the mere knowledge of the *death* and

blood-shedding of Christ, forgiveness, shelter from judgment, and redemption in measure, may be, and are known; but there will not be the solid abiding peace with God till the soul understands in some measure (who could fathom its full depths!) the meaning of the cry which issued from the soul of Christ on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That (to us) fathomless cry expressed the *position*, according to its truth, in which His holy soul stood at the time when He was enduring the judgment of God about sin! It was a moment when the whole moral nature of God, truth—majesty—righteousness—holiness, against and concerning sin, burst forth in its fullest power and expression, and discharged itself upon the head of Christ! It was a time when the moral nature of God about sin was so brought out, and exhibited, and vindicated, that He can turn towards a fallen world with the fullest display of love and righteousness, and declare Himself a just God, in justifying those who believe, *whosoever they be*, and *whatsoever be* the ruin in which their sins have placed them; and do this without the least compromise of His nature in doing so! It was a time when Christ was drinking to the dregs the cup of divine and unmingled wrath—the cup which expressed the divine judgment of God against sin—when Christ was forsaken of God; His soul bearing directly the inflicted wrath of God for sin.

Oh for a worshipping spirit to gaze upon Him at that moment. To behold Him drying up, as it were, the river of death and judgment of God upon sin, that His people might pass over dry-shod. Not one sigh of Christ—not one sorrow of His holy life, but is of infinite value to us. But it was at this unequalled scene that atonement was made: it ended in His death. Death consummated the work, but the act of death alone must not be dissociated from the previous scene. If so, it would separate it from the bearing of the judgment of God about sin. The death was the witness to this, but the cup of wrath was drained and finished when the death of Christ completed the work.

Simple souls do not distinguish in this, while they rest in peace on the cross—the death—the blood-shedding—the being made sin—the being made a curse. And in all these *rightly*; without entering into the meaning of that which God alone can fully know. They know that by means of death they are redeemed—that they are justified by blood—

by His death they have life—by the shedding of His blood they have remission. His blood it is which makes atonement for the soul. They are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. But to confine atonement *merely* to the act of *death* would indeed be to err. It would be to omit the fact of the divine judgment of God about sin, which was borne to the full by Him when forsaken of God. When He cried and was *not* heard. (Ps. xxii. 2.) This psalm gives us the *feelings* of His holy soul on the cross at the time when the *circumstances* narrated in the Gospel took place, in which verse 1 of the psalm is quoted. If we take verses 7 and 8, and compare them with Mark xv. 29-31, nothing can be plainer. It was when He made His soul an offering for sin, when He bore sin judicially before God. Simple souls look on the work as a whole, and rightly so, and with adoring hearts, they rest upon it as undergone for them, without entering fully into its meaning. With such, one would pray that the feeling may indeed be deepened, and a more worshipping spirit flow from what they have gained, daily. But when the question is before the soul, it is well to guard against confining atonement to the bare act which was the climax and accomplishment of the work, and forgetting that to which Scripture attaches such deep and pre-eminent importance.

I would add, in conclusion, that God does not call upon a sinner to believe in anything that Christ *did*, but to believe in *Christ*. He knows what He did, and accepts the sinner who believes in Him according to *His own* knowledge of the value of Christ's work, and not according to the knowledge the sinner possesses of it; still it deepens and strengthens the believer in the knowledge of God and His grace as the soul comprehends how the judgment of God for sin has been borne by the Son of God—how He ended in Himself that to which the judgment attached; and rising out of the dead, is the One in whom every one believing in Him lives.—ED.

In reply to "J. M'M., Airdrie," with reference to Isaiah xlv. 7—"How does God create evil?"

From chapters xl. to xlviii. of the prophet Isaiah, it will be clearly seen that there is a great question between Jehovah, the Lord, and the idols of Babylon. The Lord declares that He had raised up Cyrus, King of Persia, the "righteous man from the east," to deliver His people, Israel, in the face of, and in the midst of this idolatry (consult 2

Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23; and Ezra i. 1-4; and many other passages), and the idols of Babylon.

But there was then a danger also to be met, lest this Persian king or his people might attribute to their own gods of Persia this deliverance or victory over Babylon and her gods and idols (see an example of this in 2 Chron. xxv. 14-16; xxviii. 23.)

We are told that the Persians were famous for a two-fold system of idolatry—Light and Darkness, Good and Evil. And so the Lord Jehovah declares *His pre-eminence* over all these principles, which the Persian mind had deified, and with which it was familiar. It does not convey the thought that the Lord Jehovah directly creates evil; but it establishes His divine pre-eminence as God, above principles which are mere creatures or abstract qualities, and which the Persians held as gods; and to which he might attribute his victories.

Apart, too, from all this, God is Creator; and if He permits, in His wise purposes, a creature to work its own will, still He is Creator, and He made the creature, and permits it. No one in any sense is above Him, nothing can be carried on against Him. He allows evil to exhaust itself, and then His goodness—nay, *Himself*, is manifested in overruling and counteracting it.

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FRAGMENT.—If ever there was a day when it is important for every true follower of Christ to stand fast and to be true to his profession, I believe it is the present day. There is no answer to infidelity like the life of Christ displayed by the Christian. Nothing puts the madness of the infidel, and the folly of the superstitious more to shame and silence than the humble, quiet, devoted walk of a thorough-going, heavenly-minded, and divinely-taught Christian. It may be in the unlearned, and poor, and despised; but like the scent of the lowly violet, it gives its fragrance abroad, and both God and man take notice of it. Works, if only hypocritical doings, go for nothing; but works which are the genuine expression of living and walking with God in Christ, are of the same value as the hands of a good clock. A good clock without hands is, for practical purposes, of no value; but the hands on the face tell the measure of the value of the works within, and record the lapse of time. “We are His (God’s) work-

manship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk therein." (Eph. ii. 10.) Now is the time for works, and for overcoming, to him that has an ear to hear.

### DEVOTEDNESS.

Begone, each earth-born tie and bond,  
 Begone affection, deep and fond,  
     That Christ does not partake.  
 Have I box of alabaster  
 Which is not broken for the Master,  
 To which my heart but clings the fasto:  
     Help me my box to break.

Oh! break, whatever it may be,  
 That holdeth back my heart from Thee,  
     Who died my heart to win.  
 All other love, however dear,  
 However old, or strong, or near,  
 Of which *Thou* art not theme and sphere,  
     Is only polished sin.

All other love would cease to flow—  
 But *Thine* no chill nor change can know,  
     In spite of ill return.  
 The source of *Thine* is not in me—  
 In what I am, or I can be—  
 The deep, deep spring is found in Thee—  
     It cannot cease to burn.

Upon my callous heart impress  
 The depth and height of all Thy grace,  
     That I may love Thee more.  
 That thou canst call a worm Thy treasure—  
 That Thou canst find in me Thy pleasure—  
 Tells of a love which none can measure,  
     But worship and adore!

J. W. T.

### THE THESSALONIANS.

#### I THESS.

THERE is something very beautiful in the condition of soul in which we find the Christians at Thessalonica. There is something so fresh, and bright, and happy in the whole tone of their life, and walk, and ways. Paul's letter to them is not so much a grand doctrinal essay, as some portions of his

epistles ; as the joyous outflow of the heart of one who looked upon them as a father does his children (ch. ii. 11); or a nurse her charge, whose growth and wants she had watched over, and whom she had cherished.

One sees this state of soul sometimes in a young Christian, or a young assembly of saints. There is such freshness, and earnestness, and love ; and the things of Christ are so dearly prized. The Spirit of adoption is so strong, and the confiding love of children so marked, that even an older saint, while he can truly desire a deepening knowledge of Christ Himself, to possess the soul, cannot but feel his heart warmed and encouraged when he beholds it. How sad, too, is the reverse, or the declension from this state. When the heart grows calculating and cold, and the freshness of the things of Christ have lost their power ; when the truth is feared, and the world is not overcome. Faces that the labourer was strengthened when he saw them drinking in the truth, and, regularly as the hour came, were at their accustomed place in the meeting—now but seldom there. And when he meets them, there is no longer the old warm welcome, and the bright intelligent look when Christ is spoken of ; but the heart filled with other things, and open to the charge, “Thou hast left thy first love.”

It is the only epistle in which Paul addresses the assembly as “in God the Father.” It was their characteristic feature. As little children, the Spirit of adoption filled them, while they waited for God’s Son from heaven (ch. i. 9, 10). And this, their blessed hope, is much dwelt upon, and inwrought into the very texture of their whole life here below. The coming of the Lord Jesus for His own, was what they awaited (ch. i. 9, 10); and then Paul would see the fruit of his labour, as Paul’s Master, too, would His. (Ch. ii. 19.) To be established unblameable in holiness, and the time when holiness would have its true value would be at that day. (Ch. iii. 13.) Those who had slept in Jesus would not lose the blessing of such a hope ; and those who mourned their loss, for the moment, would see them again at that day. (Ch. iv. 13-18.) And lastly, God preserved His people to the time when Christ would come for them. (Ch. v. 23.)

How heartily, then, could Paul give thanks about them, and ever make mention of them in his prayers—not as though they *needed* something, but that they might be *preserved* in the freshness and true-heartedness of this beautiful condition

of their Christian life. "Remembering, without ceasing, your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."

All the graces of Christian life which ever abide—faith, hope, and love—the "three-fold cord," binding together all that they did, were there. If they wrought, it was a work of faith. The soul counted upon God, and was sustained in doing His work, that He would be with His servants, and own their service as His own. Their labour was not a mere routine or duty, but it was a labour undertaken in love. And the Lord Jesus was the object before the heart, and the affections were centred on Him. *He* was coming, who had identified Himself with His people; and while the labour went on, He sustained the heart, and the heart waited patiently for Him. The conscience, too, was kept right—each one walking before a God and Father's eye, and in His presence nothing was allowed contrary to His nature and will. Thus *heart* and *conscience* were filled and directed. Nothing can exceed this beautiful picture of the freshness of the first blush of Christian life in the world.

Surely, then, it did not need that the apostle should see into the counsels of the Book of Life, to know if they had been the objects of God's election. He saw that in their lives, which was as plain to him as day; "For our gospel," he says, "came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." And they became followers of Paul and of the Lord, "having received the word in much affliction." How, indeed, could the enemy permit such a bright testimony in his domain without persecuting and afflicting those who bore it?

What can you do? what can he do with those who, if they are beaten before the council, depart, rejoicing that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name? (Acts v. 41.) What can be done to those who, if imprisoned, with their feet made fast in the stocks, fill the prison courts with praises sung to God? (Acts xvi. 25.) When put to prison and in chains, could lift up a triumphant head, and desire that their captors might have what they had, the joy which filled their hearts, the helmet of salvation covering their heads, excepting the bonds? (Acts xxvi. 29.) What can you do to people who, if the enemy kills them, go to heaven praying for their enemies, unmindful of the stones which disfigured the earthly tabernacle? (Acts vii. 60.) And such, in its

truest sense, is Christianity. And God filled the hearts of these beloved ones "with joy of the Holy Ghost," if the enemy cast them into the fire of affliction. God was seen in these beloved people, and His word had produced in them what the world had to bear testimony to—a power that was above its malice, and, do what it would, it could not take away.

Paul had no need to speak of his loved children in the faith. The world took knowledge of them, in spite of itself, and their faith to God was spread abroad. Happy state! when the enemy is forced to bear testimony to such a state of the children of God, instead of having to point at them with the finger of scorn, when they are not in their practice, what they profess to be in their faith. One can enter in some weak measure into the deep anxiety of his heart, when he would know how they were enduring these afflictions. And the joy he had when he had learned how they had endured; and how they had held him in the affectionate remembrance of their hearts. "Now," says he, "we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." (Ch. iii. 1-8.)

The Lord give His beloved people to know, in their inmost heart, that He has never changed—that they may count upon Him with all the confidence of these first children in the faith. And energize their hearts to a more earnest devotedness, in view of His still nearer coming—a more true-hearted following of Him; that they may be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."—Ed.

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## THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

THE resurrection and glory of the Lord Jesus is a great fact. Whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear, there it is, and cannot be gainsayed. And further, we have to do with it, and cannot escape from the application of it to ourselves. It is set above us, and before us; as at creation, the sun was set in the heavens, and the creation of God had to do with it.

It is thus treated in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. It is there dealt with as a fact, from the application of which to themselves none could escape. It has its different virtue, its two-fold force and meaning; and men are to know how it addresses itself to each of them. But there it is and no one can elude it.



Who could pluck the sun out of the heavens?

The glory seated itself in the cloud, and Israel *must* know it there, and have to do with it there. It may conduct them cheerfully, or rebuke them and judge them; but there it is in their company, in their midst, and the camp in its different conditions must have to do with it.

Prophets from God came among the people. There they are, whether the people will hear, or whether they will forbear they have to know—they *must* know—that a prophet has been among them. They cannot gainsay the fact, or escape its application to themselves in judgment or blessing.

The budding rod I might have noticed in this connection. It is brought out from the sanctuary to the camp, and the camp *must* accept its presence. That it is there is a fact, and none can deny it, whether they will use that fact obediently, and taste the fruit of the service of God's Anointed One, or whether they will still rebel to their own destruction is another thing. But the budding rod that speaks both of judgment and of mercy is in the midst of them.

The Lord in the garden of Eden was the same at the beginning. It was a fact. Adam could not displace Him. He was there—as the sun at that moment was in the heavens.

Adam *must* have to do with Him. If he be in innocency, as in ch. ii., that fact will be his joy. If he be in guilt, as in Ch. iii., that fact will be his doom. But he cannot elude the force of it; nor withdraw himself from the application of it.

I might say that Christ in the world that Satan had usurped through subtilty, was also a kindred fact. None could, in that day, deny it, or rid themselves of the force of it. Satan himself shall know it, and men shall have their blessing brought to them by it; or their guilt and judgment enhanced through it. The kingdom of God had come, and they must accept it as a fact.

Just thus, just after this manner, is the present great fact of the resurrection. Jesus is risen and exalted—He is ascended and glorified. We might as well pluck the sun from the heavens as try to escape the application of this fact to our condition, whether of repentance or of unbelief.

The great characteristic teaching of the apostles, in the book of Acts, is *interpretation of this fact to the conscience of sinners.*

This makes apostolic ministry among men very simple; and blessed it is from its simplicity.

Peter, who opens that ministry, at once takes the resurrection of the Lord as his text. He exhibits that great fact in its *judicial*, and its *saving* power. He preaches from it the glories of the Lord Himself; and he derives from it the blessings of all believing sinners. It is the object constantly before him. He gives it different characters, or invests it with different virtues; but it is the object constantly before him, and the fact which he declares again and again—his fullest interpretation of it being found at the very close of his ministry, in the house of Cornelius, when he preaches that the risen Jesus is set of God both for judgment and for salvation. (See ch. x. 42, 43.)

The risen Jesus may be *boldly resisted*, as in Saul's case. (Acts ix.) But it is equally death for the soul to despise it. (Ch. xiii. 41.) It is not so shocking to the moral sense of man, but it is equally death in the judgment of God.

Paul in his ministry, as constantly uses the same great fact of the resurrection of Christ, interpreting it, like Peter, to the heart and conscience.

In his first preaching at Antioch we see this. In the synagogue there, he conducts the story of God's ways with Israel from the day of the call of Abraham to the resurrection of Christ; and then upon the resurrection, preaches the forgiveness of sins. But he adds that the despising of that great fact, the being careless about it, with a carnal mind indifferent to it, will as surely be followed by judgment, as the generation which the prophet addressed was visited by the judgment of God through the Chaldees.

At Athens, where his next great preaching was, he has still the same great fact as his theme. But he gives it its solemn meaning. He invests it with its terrors: for he found this Gentile people full of idolatry, though in the pride of their sects of learning, and in the carnal busy desire of anything new in the earth or among men. He tells them of this great mystery, which was a fact in heaven, registered there, and he gives it its meaning for them. Referring to their besotted worship, he says to them, "the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts xvii. 30, 31.)

And after his ministry had formally terminated, and he becomes the prisoner rather than the servant of Jesus, still before his judges it is of the resurrection he speaks. (See Acts xxvi.)

The moral that we draw is, the *sweet positive application of this great fact to each one of us*. We have, each one of us, individually to do with it—or rather it has to do with us.

The resurrection speaks of judgment to man as man—for it is the witness of a solemn collision between God and man. *God is on the side of man's victim*. God has glorified the One, whom man denied and crucified. Here is collision—and the result of that is judgment: for God is stronger than man. Man must be overthrown in such conflict. Judgment *must* fall on him that is opposed to God. The "pricks" cannot be "kicked against." Saul of Tarsus persecuting Jesus, shall be found in a work of self-destruction.

The resurrection speaks of salvation to the broken, confessing sinner. Because the resurrection witnesses *God's satisfaction in that atonement for sin which Jesus offered*; and if God is satisfied, who can condemn? If God witnesses that such has been put away for all that will trust and plead the death of Christ—who shall lay anything to the charge of such? what tongue can prevail against them?

The resurrection thus speaks of "judgment" and of "mercy," as we either look to the cross of Christ, with the interest of convicted believing hearts, or as we despise and slight it. It has a voice in the ear of all. It speaks to us, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear. To enjoy it as the salvation of God, we must personally, and livingly by faith, be brought into connection with it—but if we slight it all our days, it will at the end *bring itself in connection with us*, as it were whether we will or not. In this way it brings to mind the Lord Jesus in Mark v.—In spite of Satan, Jesus puts Himself in connection with him in the person of the Gadarene, in order to judge him and destroy his work. But He does not put Himself in connection with the poor diseased woman in the crowd, till she by faith had put herself and the necessity she carried in connection with Him. Surely her faith was given to her of God. It was no notion of her own, but the fruit of the drawing of the Father in the power of the Spirit. But still so it was; that the virtue in Jesus did not visit her, till her faith had visited Him.

And this distinction has a deeply serious fact in it. If

we by faith use not a risen Jesus now, and get the virtue that is in Him, He will visit us by and by, and that, too, with the judgment that will then be in Him. No depreciation will then avail—no seeking now can but avail!

By the preaching of the resurrection in the Acts, we learn that God has taken out of man's hand the very weapon of his fullest enmity against Himself, and used it for man's everlasting blessing—but if man will despise such goodness then he must answer for having taken that weapon into his hand. The sword that man was using in hostility to God, God has turned as into a plough-share, whereby to get for man the bread of everlasting life. Joseph of old was sold by his brethren—but Joseph sold became an instrument and channel of life to them who had sold him. Their very wickedness was turned of God to their blessing. J. G. B.

## THE JEWS.

ISAIAH xviii.

It will be interesting at the present time to say a few words on the chapter at the head of this paper.

It is a sweet privilege to the Christian to know beforehand the things that are coming on the earth, although they do not immediately concern him. His hope is a heavenly one, where judgments cannot come. Those judgments happen preparatory to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. The Christian awaits the coming of the "Morning Star," ere the darkness which now shrouds the world is dispelled by the rising of the "Sun of Righteousness," which fills the world with blessing—he will then "shine forth as the sun" with Christ in the Father's kingdom.

The chapter gives us, in seven verses, a complete history of the events which take place at the time the Jews return to their land in a state of apostasy. The Lord does not interfere, but allows things to go on apparently prospering, and Israel having even the appearance of fruitbearing in the land of the fathers. The nations who had favoured this return then recommence the old hostility to the Jews who become their prey. The Lord then interferes with His mighty arm, and brings a remnant of them as a "present" to Himself to the place of His name—the Mount Zion which He loved.

Verses 1-3.—The prophet pronounces "woe" upon some

great unnamed nation which lies outside the rivers of Ethiopia or Cush (the descendants of Cush, we are told, made a settlement on both these rivers), the Euphrates and the Nile—the two great boundaries of the land of Israel. We read in Gen. xv. 18, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt (the Nile) unto the great river, the river Euphrates." He pronounces woe upon this nation, which is evidently a great maritime power, and which is engaged in favouring and helping the return of the people of Israel, "scattered and peeled"—wonderful from their beginning hitherto. He then calls all the inhabitants of the world and dwellers upon the earth to see and to hear.

Verse 4.—The Lord then tells the prophet that he will take his rest, and consider, in his dwelling-place, all that goes on—as yet He does not interfere. He allows man to run on to the height of his madness and folly, that He may show him his powerlessness.

Verses 5, 6.—Before the *harvest*—a figure of separating and gathering for the *vintage* of judgment (both figures are used in many places of Scripture thus, see Rev. xiv. 14-20), when the returned Jews seem to be spreading out as a vine in the land; and even the appearance of fruitbearing putting itself forth—"the sour grape ripening in the flower." The vine is an old figure of the nation (see Isa. v.; Ps. lxxx. 8-16, &c.) All is then destroyed. The old hatred of the nations is turned against Israel. They are cut down and destroyed. The emissaries of Satan shall summer upon them; and the nations shall winter upon them; and all that appeared so promising is dashed to the ground. The time of the "great tribulation," or "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. xxx. 7) has come, "but he shall be saved out of it." In the language of Deuteronomy xxviii. 26, "Thy carcase shall be meat unto all the fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away." Or, as the Lord Jesus, talking of his time of trouble, says, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." (Matt. xxiv. 28, and the whole chapter to v. 44.)

Verse 7.—"In that time"—in such a state of things as will then be, "shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts." A remnant of the people scattered and peeled—from a people terrible (or wonderful) from their beginning hitherto. The Lord Himself brings to Himself a present of the residue, or spared remnant, of His people, "to the place

of the Lord of hosts, the Mount Zion," which He loved. That little spot which is His rest for ever! "For the Lord hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14.) Having refused nationally to receive the Gospel of God's *grace*, they are saved through the *judgments* of the Lord, which introduce the Kingdom.

As to the Christian's hope, it is but one. The coming of the Lord Jesus to take His people out of the world, before these judgments take place. He has promised this. He has said to them, "Because thou has kept the word of my patience, *I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*" (Rev. iii. 20.) This *hour* of temptation is detailed in Isaiah xxiv., and takes place ere the Lord of Hosts reigns in Mount Zion, and before his ancients gloriously. Isaiah xxv. tells us of the deliverance of the remnant of the Jews, who say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isaiah xxvi. gives us the song of the delivered remnant, and some details. Ch. xxvii., the completing of the work, and the gathering of the ten tribes, to worship with their brethren of Judah, the Lord of Hosts at Jerusalem, in the glorious days of the millennial age.

The Lord's *coming* is the hope of the Church—His *appearing in glory with her*, after this tribulation, which happens between these events, is the deliverance of the Jews, and the introduction of the Kingdom.—ED.

## AS CHRIST IS, SO ARE WE; OR THE CHRISTIAN'S RECEPTION OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

(Concluded from page 187.)

THEN Jesus is not only full of grace, but He is also full of truth. Fallen man by nature is a liar. He goes about speaking lies as soon as he is born. He is a child of him who is the father of lies, who abode not in the truth. Now God is, on the other hand, the God of Truth. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He." (Deut,

xxxii. 4.) "Into Thine hand I commit my spirit: Thou has redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." (Ps. xxxi. 5.) His eternal purpose has been to reveal Himself, and, therefore, He would make Himself known as the God of truth. Hence, Jesus, the image of the invisible God, has come full of truth; yea, the truth itself, for He says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

There is, however, a more especial way in which Christ is "the Truth," and of which He was full. I mean as regards the types and ceremonies of the law, all of which he has fulfilled or filled out. They were all but "shadows of good things to come"—Christ is the substance. In the burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin God had no pleasure, for they could not take away sin; but in Him who was the Lamb of His own providing—who had, as such, offered Himself to God by the Eternal Spirit—He was truly well pleased. Christ did all God's will. He put away sin, and by the sacrifice of Himself, He enabled God, as it were, to reveal Himself, in the many and varied aspects of His character, but that of love more especially. The cross is the power of God, whereby He is able to show forth the exceeding riches, yea, the fulness of His grace. Christ Jesus has then made good all the types of the Jewish dispensation. However, in every sense He is the Truth, and they who have believed in Him, and have by grace tasted that the Lord is gracious, have received of this His fulness, and the Truth becomes part and parcel of him who receives it; for the Word of God is an *engrafted* word, to be received with meekness. Most important word, indeed, is that word *engrafted*. It means a great deal. It shows that the Truth becomes a *part of ourselves*, when received in meekness and simplicity. Thus, then, again even in this respect, we are as Christ is, and of His fulness have we received, and grace for grace.

And now, lastly, the disciples beheld in this blessed person the Christ of God's glory—"the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Man born in the image of God has come short of His glory, and is dead in trespasses and in sins; altogether unlike God, and altogether opposed to Him. Now, we have, as has been so often already said, been predestinated to the glory of God's grace, but now I find we are destined to be to the praise of His glory. God means to display His glory, and we who are saved in this day of grace are reserved, as it were, for its manifesta-

tion. The law could do nothing for God in the display of His glory by us. The law entered, and it only brought out man's corrupt nature. Still, the law had a glory of its own, but that glory was to be done away. God's purpose was to shew forth the excellence of His glory in man. All His grace is to be shewn out in man. All His wisdom, too, is to be shewn out in the Church (Eph. iii. 10), and so also God's glory, its praises, its excellencies. (Eph. i. 14.) The law, I say, could not do this, hence the Lord Jesus has come—the Word of God, the image of the invisible God, the express image of His person, the brightness of His glory—to make known His glory in all its brilliancy, splendour, and magnificence. God is the God of Glory. (Ps. xxix. 3; Acts vii. 2.) He is the Father of Glory (Eph. i. 17), and, I repeat, that it is to the praise of His glory that He is, by the Holy Ghost, calling out and bringing many sons to glory. The disciples beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father. Marvellous as the revelation of this glory was in the incarnate God, it is by virtue of His death that God has glorified Him, and seated Him on His own throne. He has crowned Him with glory and honour, and now in heaven He reflects the glory of God. The glorious Gospel, or rather the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, is now preached, for the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ.

And now, blessed be God, by which we can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We can look forward to the time when we shall be personally in the presence thereof, free from all fear and anxiety. Yea, we can even now, in this present time, rejoice in it, and say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." But now we are in a measure made partakers of the glory as now revealed in the face of Jesus, the last Adam. Satan's (the god of this world) great aim is to keep the minds of those who believe not, blinded. However, to them who believe, the light of the Gospel of the glory shines into them, because God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into their hearts the light of the knowledge of His glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) Thus are they made the recipients of the glory of Him who is Himself the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His person; and as we go on with Him, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.



Oh! then, may we who have possessed this blessed gift, whose is the hope of glory, live in closer and more intimate communion with Him, that more of His glory may be seen in all our ways! Oh! may we walk worthy of Him who hath called us to His Kingdom and glory; for when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with Him in glory; and then shall we, before the countless myriads of the heavenly hosts, be to the praise of God's glory.

E. C.

## NOTES ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER.

(Chap. i. 1-12.)

PETER's heart never left the spot in which the Lord placed it, in John xxi. 15-17; and this was such a beautiful exhibition of what grace can do, and how it acts. He had sinned and fallen sadly; but when the Lord first probes and then restores his conscience, He commits to him that which was most dear to Him on earth. He says, "Feed my lambs"—"Shepherd my sheep"—"Feed my sheep." And as we have said Peter's heart never left the place where Christ had placed it, he not only does feed the flock, but he encourages others to do so likewise. "Feed the flock of God," he says, "which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." (1 Peter v. 2.) How sad when men call the flock of God *their flock*. Surely such a thought could not come from one who has the smallest apprehension of what the flock of God is, or fellowship with the mind of the Chief Shepherd, and possessor of it.

How gently, and with what suited pasture, does Peter, by the spirit of God, feed the flock of God, in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles and in his Epistles. One is struck with the extreme simplicity of all that he says to them, telling them how they were converted, and how redeemed—how they should walk, and how they should grow to salvation—what various dangers beset them round about, and what trials they would pass through—and in each position he finds them, he has a suited word to lead them along. He owns that Paul has many hard things to be understood in his epistles, and things that unlearned and unstable souls might wrest to their own destruction; but he has his own business to feed the flock, and to choose suited

and tender pasture to their need, and he sets himself to his work happily and simply.

Ch. I.—Now, the very opening words of his first epistle give us a key to the state of things that is contemplated.

He begins by addressing them as “Strangers.” What! you say, Israel addressed as a stranger!—Israel in “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia,” and *not* in their own land! They all the world must be out of sorts—everything must be astray when Israel is a stranger. To be sure, everything is out of sorts, and this is what he contemplates. What is to be the resource then, if Israel is looked upon thus? Surely there must be some hope put before the flock, if Israel is scattered from the land of their fathers and the Messiah slain and rejected. To be sure there is; and not merely a hope, but a “lively hope.” There is an inheritance “reserved in heaven for you.” It won’t “fade away” as your Canaan did. It can’t be defiled as your fathers have defiled the land; it is uncorruptible and undefiled, and it won’t fade away. Very sweet this for the flock of God to know—suited pasture in the wilderness for the strangers!

Now, let me read verse two, thus, and show you the contrast, what you have now, with what you have lost:—“Elect according to the purpose of Jehovah, through sanctification of ordinances, unto obedience of the law, and sprinkling of the blood of the old covenant, which sealed your condemnation.” Your nation was chosen of Jehovah, and separated (or sanctified) by the ordinances with which He surrounded you, and you were thus brought under the obedience of the law, which you took upon yourselves, foolish people; and Moses sprinkled the book of that covenant with the blood, which sealed your ruin. What business had you to take upon yourselves a covenant of obedience? Look at the results of it now. Where is your Messiah? Where is your nation? The one slain, the other scattered.

But every privilege you had has been replaced by a better thing. You have been chosen now of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, who has brought you in His quickening power into the position where you can be obedient after the pattern of One who never did His own will, although it was a perfect will, but gave it up and set aside His will, because he came to obey, and His obedience ended in death. And His blood, instead of sealing your condemnation, has cleansed you from everything that would

render you unfit for His presence, and has sealed your *salvation* instead of your *ruin*. Why, dear me, you say, how full is that little verse ! how a dear one of the flock of God would have entered into all in it, in contrast to what he had lost. Surely Peter was feeding the flock. "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy." Now, we will stop there for a moment. What does "abundant mercy" mean? It means, that while man had failed in every way, and Israel had most wretchedly failed, God's mercy was only the more abundant. It could not be dried up, although man did everything that might have dried it up. And so, when all on man's side was ruined, God's mercy was only discovered to be the more abundant. Well, what has He done through this abundant mercy? He "hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Do you remember in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke, when the two poor, sad sheep of the flock were wandering in such a disconsolate state away from Jerusalem, and when *Somebody* accosted them, and they said, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done." Don't your heart rejoice when you see what alacrity the "lively hope" gave to their feet in returning to Jerusalem with the news that the Lord was risen indeed, and had appeared unto Simon? They were surely begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. God had come in and taken their Messiah out of His grave, and was about to put Him in heaven, and, consequently, their hopes and prospects would be there with Him, in the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." It is not in *your* keeping now. If it were you would only lose it as you did the other. God is keeping it for you, and you may rest satisfied that *He* won't do with it what *you* would.

But, you would say, I am sure He can and will keep the inheritance—He is well able to do that; but what about me? I can't keep myself, let alone the inheritance. Well, but suppose, for a moment, that He is not only keeping *the inheritance for you*, but keeping *you for the inheritance*. Won't that give you courage? And this is what He declares

He is doing. The inheritance is reserved in heaven for you, and you are kept for the inheritance here below, and kept by the power of God, too. Now, is not Peter shepherding and feeding the flock of God? And who was better fitted to say that word than he?—"kept by the power of God through faith." Don't you remember, when Satan wanted to have him, that he might sift him like wheat? (Luke xxii. 31.) And how the Lord prayed for him that his faith might not fail? Well, Peter was "kept by the power of God through faith." He needed to be sifted, and the Lord did not pray that he might not have the sifting, but that he might be kept through the sifting. Don't you think that Peter could say when it was all over, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. . . . Thou winnowest my path!" (Ps. cxxxix. 1-3, margin.) Now, he could tell us a secret of how the Lord kept him. And mark, it was not a being kept like a lifeless thing, but by the link of faith being sustained in the soul, teaching it to cling to God, who was sustaining the link with His own power. Surely he was thus doing what the Lord had told him to do. He was a man whose heart was converted, or turned back again to God, who was strengthening his brethren.

Well, you say, that is green pasture surely for the flock, and, better still, the work is never finished till the inheritance is attained—it is "unto salvation." But then, again, you will say, Have we not got this salvation? Indeed, you have not, or you would not be a stranger. I'll tell you what you *have* got. You *have* "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls;" but you have *not* got the end of your hope—(v. 13)—the salvation that is to be brought to you, and is now ready to be revealed. You must wait for that, and, meanwhile, you may "greatly rejoice" in it, even though now for a season you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

But surely "manifest temptations" are not "green pastures" for the flock. Well, they do not at first seem so; but there is a "needs be" for those things at times. We put gold in the furnace to purge away the dross from it, and what is pure comes out of the furnace divested of the dross. This is a little hint to the flock that they *will* have their faith put into the furnace to be tried. By-and-bye, we will see the various aspects of the furnace opened out to us largely, but here is the hint to prepare the flock for what is coming. And

these trials of your faith are very precious, he says, and how much so when they will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Do you remember when Thomas said he would not believe unless he saw the Lord—(John xxi. 25),—and how the Lord, after convincing him, says, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” How sweet for the dear flock to be amongst those who had not seen the good Shepherd with their mortal eyes, and yet to have such a knowledge of Him in the heart as to have learned to love Him and know Him when unseen—“whom not having seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” Dear me, would a dear one of the flock say, how much better than all we have been looking for of old is what we now receive as the end of our faith. We used to be looking for salvation from the Gentiles, when they used to lord it over the poor captives of Zion; and salvation from our enemies, of our land, and our bodies: but now we have a much better thing, we have received the end of our faith, even the salvation of our *souls*. Surely this was a “green pasture” and a “still water,” after getting a glimpse into the furnace.

Now, we have a little parenthesis (v. 10-12) about this salvation. The fine old prophets spoke about it by the Spirit of Christ, and when they sat down to study their glorious strains, they discovered that it was not for themselves but for us—for the dear flock—they did minister the things which the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven to proclaim through those who preached of those things. I am telling you, says this dear shepherd of the flock, of the journey which lies between the *sufferings* of Christ and His rejection, and the *glories* which the prophets saw would follow. I have got a commission from the Chief Shepherd to lead the dear flock through that journey. The prophets could tell you of the *sufferings* and of the *glories* which would follow, but they had not *my* business—to tell you all that would come in between these things.

What could the angels know of this salvation? Surely they desired to *look* into it, but it was too wonderful for one of these excellent beings to *know*. What an object for wonder and praise to God a redeemed sinner must be to

them. An angel is maintained in his first estate, where God placed him; a redeemed sinner is taken up out of the dunghill, and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb of God, and brought up to the very throne of God itself. Wonder of wonders! Well may the angels desire to look into these things.

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### FRAGMENTS.

Such was Christ on earth. One was with God. The sinner, who would have been ashamed to show himself to man, could hide his face in the bosom of Jesus, sure of not finding a reproof there. Not a sin allowed, (if there had been, confidence would not have been established, because He would not have revealed the Holy God,) but a heart which, through the midst of the sin, received the sinner in His arms,—and it was the heart of God!

Christ was all that in this world, and He was much more than my poor pen could tell,—*and man rejected Him!*

The measure of my privilege is, that I am in Christ—the measure of my responsibility is, that Christ is in me.

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### SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

T. S., Crewe.—In reply to your question on Matt. xiii. 33:—

You will find it a rule in Scripture, that leaven is generally used as typical of evil, whether in doctrine or practice. For instance, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. . . . Then understood they how that He bade them, not to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” (Matt. xvi. 6, 11, 12.) See also Mark viii. 15; Luke xii. 1. In the last verse we read, “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Paul writes to the Corinthians, with regard to evil *practice*, “know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Cor. v. 6.) And to the Galatians, with regard to evil *doctrine*, subversive of Christianity, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” (Gal. v. 9.)

In Matt. xiii. 33, we are taught in one of six parables, which follow that of the sower, a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, in its new mysterious form, which was about to

be brought into the world on the rejection of the King. For one peculiar and striking characteristic of the kingdom of heaven in mystery is that the *King is not here*. This was some of the “things new” which a scribe, instructed in the matter, would now bring out of his treasures, added to the “things old” which the prophets had aforetime written about the kingdom of heaven. (ver. 52.) When it was said that it would be “as the days of heaven upon earth.” (Deut. xi. 21.) And of the throne of the King, “His throne (should be) as the days of heaven.” (Ps. lxxxix. 29.) And again, the Gentiles should know that “the heavens do rule.” (Dan. iv. 26.)

Now all this state of things was entirely set aside for the time, because of the rejection of the King—of Christ. And, instead of all the blessings consequent upon his reception, a state of things far different would be introduced. The enemy would come and sow tares amongst the wheat in the world, or, as it is called, “the field.” (Ver. 38.) The outward appearance the kingdom of heaven would then assume would be that of a vast sheltering power, under the figure of a tree, which would shelter the birds of the air, or as they are interpreted to be the emissaries of the wicked one, (see verses 4, 19, 32.) And again as our parable tells us, doctrine or profession would spread through the three measures of meal, or the sphere of the nominal profession of Christianity, till the whole should be leavened. One has only to lift up their eyes, with but a small amount of spiritual intelligence, on the state of things in Christendom around them, and see what has come to pass.—ED.

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## “UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMES.”

“And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all perception; that ye may distinguish things that differ; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God”—*Phil. i. 9-11.*

Attend, ye keepers of days and times,  
 Observers of months and years,  
 Receive a message in simple rhymes,  
 A message for hearing ears.  
 God marketh seasons for men to mind,  
 And times we are bound to heed,  
 Search out His sayings, if we would find  
 His answer to all your need.

*"There is a season for everything,"*

One preacher has wisely said—

*"There is a season for everything,"*

And wisdom is living bread:

A time to be born and a time to die,

To plant and to clear the ground,

A time to kill, and a time to try

The waters where health is found.

*"To every purpose there is a time,"*

The voices of Scripture tell,

*"To every purpose there is a time,"*

Consider the matter well:

A time to break down, and a time to build;

Be vigilant, mark the two;

And whether with tears or with laughter filled,

Keep ever the Lord in view.

There's a time to mourn and a time to dance,

To gather, to cast away;

For stones that the builder's work enhance

Are steadfast beyond decay.

There's a time to lavish the wealth of love,

And sternly its smile refuse;

A time when toil is all price above,

And also a time to lose.

The wise observe both a time to keep

And a season away to throw,

A time for silence, a time to speak,

A season to rend, to sew;

A time to love, and a time to hate;

For evil doth love abhor:

Till Peace and Righteousness share the gate,

He setteth "the time for war."

\* \* \* \* \*

One holy Preacher hath walked the earth,

Supreme in His Sovereign skill,

Distributing wine in a time of dearth,

By doing the Father's will.

His ear was open from morn to morn,

Through sorrow he deigned to learn;

To witness and suffer the Christ was born,

Omnipotent to discern.

No more He taketh His course of light

O'er scenes that are waste with sin;

Ascended on high, He dispenseth might,

And watcheth His armies win.

The blood of the lamb, His word of power

No enemy dare gainsay,

The conflict thickens one closing hour.

But victory crowns the day.



## AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

WHAT does God require as an atonement for my sin? *Is it tears?* The tears of the blessed Lord went up to His Father as "an offering of a sweet-smelling savour," as He wept at the tomb of Lazarus and over the beloved but apostate city of Jerusalem. The tears of the aged Paul and youthful Timothy (Acts xx. 19, 31; 2 Cor. ii. 4; 2 Tim. i. 4), were well-pleasing to God, as they wept with anxiety over those the Lord had committed to their charge. But where, in the whole canon of Scripture do we find that *tears* were ever an atonement for sin?

*Will fastings avail?* The blessed Lord fasted forty days and forty nights while He was tempted of the Devil; and He, as ever, in this, was doing what was well-pleasing to His Father. The prophets and teachers of Antioch likewise fasted as they waited upon the commands of the Holy Ghost. (Acts xiii. 1, 2.) But where does God tell us that *fasting* will procure the pardon of sins! On the contrary, though the self-righteous pharisee of Luke xviii. fasted "twice in the week," he went not down to his house justified.

*Will prayers avail?* Jesus "continued all night in prayer to God." (Luke vi. 12.) Cornelius, "a just man, and one that feared God," (and "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,"—Prov. i. 7,) "prayed to God alway;" and his prayer came up for a memorial before God, and Peter was sent to deliver him by the word of salvation, and thus introduce him into the blessed liberty wherewith Christ doth make His people free. The poor publican, too, was heard acceptably in his groan of bondage—he "went down justified rather than the" Pharisee. But where does God reveal that *prayers* can come up to God as an atonement for sin? On the contrary, "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xv. 8.) "God heareth not sinners." (John ix. 31.) "When they make many prayers he will not hear." (Is. i. 15.)

*Will sorrow for sins profit?* The soul of the blessed Saviour was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death." (Matt. xxvi. 38.) The disciples of Matt. xvii. 23, and the elders of Acts xx. 38, were "exceeding sorry,"—the former at hearing of the approaching trouble of their beloved Master, the latter because they should see the face of their instructor no more. The Corinthian assembly sorrowed after a godly sort, and "care-

fully" cleared themselves of the sin which was amongst them. But where does the Word of God teach that any amount of *sorrow for sins* will take away their smallest stain? Judas sorrowed in vain--Esau sorrowed in vain. *Life* alone can produce that "godly sorrow" that "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of;" and they were lifeless!

*Will works do nothing?* Jesus worked the works of Him that sent Him while it was day, for the night was coming in which none could work; and of His great atoning work we will speak more again. Rahab, in the full persuasion that the God of Israel was "God in heaven above and in earth beneath," and, knowing that He had "given them the land," "received the spies with peace," and perished not with them that believed not, thus proving her faith by her works. Abraham staggered not at the demand of God for his son, Isaac, but endured the trial of his faith by offering his only son on the altar. But where does Scripture ever tell of any amount of *works* serving as a recompense for sin? On the contrary, "by the works of law no flesh is justified." (Gal. ii. 16.) Righteousness is "to him that worketh not." (Rom. iv. 5.) "By wicked works we are enemies to God." (Col. i. 21.)

*Will ordinances do?* We read that those who gladly received the word under the preaching of Peter (Acts ii. 41) were baptized and broke bread. Paul himself was baptized and eat the Lord's Supper with the disciples at Troas. (Acts xx. 7.) But where did God at any time provide that either *baptism* or the *Lord's Supper* should be for a moment thought of as an escape from the righteous penalty due for sin?

Dear reader, if you are resting on your *tears* or your *fastings*, your *sorrow*, your *prayers*, your *works*, or your *ordinances*, as a means wherewith to get rid of your *sins*, or aid in doing so, I most solemnly warn you that you are building on a foundation of sand—that you are presenting to God that which He will not accept from any unsaved sinner!

His requirement for sin is *death*! not any of the things I have named, which are right and good in their proper place.

And now let me assure you that Jesus, eighteen hundred years ago, met the righteous judgment of a holy God for sin—gave up His precious life for us. His presence at the right hand of God is a witness to you that God is eternally satisfied for the atonement He has made for the sins of the vilest sinner. Do you then believe this?

May I then entreat you to turn away from those things in which you have been vainly trusting hitherto, and rest your soul henceforward on CHRIST! as the all-sufficient ransom for your soul—the already accepted propitiation for your sin!

I tell you that, had he left one atom of His work unfinished, He could not be now where He is, at the right hand of God. Oh, look at Him *there* and be satisfied that He is the *same* Jesus that died for you. His wounds show it—His words tell it. Acknowledge Him then as your Saviour, and know that you are saved! Believe on Him in your heart, confess Him with your mouth, and righteousness and salvation are alike *yours* this moment.

Continue then to gaze on Him, and, as Stephen, you will be inwardly and outwardly conformed to His image. (Compare Acts vii. 59, 60; Luke xxiii. 34, 46; Acts vi. 15; 2 Cor. iii. 18.)

“*The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin.*”  
(1 John i. 7.) D. T. G.

## CONFORMITY TO CHRIST.

It is in proportion as we truly appreciate and admire any one that we desire conformity to them, and imitate them and their ways. It is even so in the things of this life with man and man.

Now, God has given to every child of His that which alone is capable of enjoying Himself. Formerly in our old connection, as descendants of the first Adam, we had no desires towards God, nor seeking after that which was according to His mind. On the contrary, we followed the bent of our own evil propensities—a desire to be like that which is of God, never surely could originate from beneath, or from the carnal mind which is ever at enmity to Him. But such a wish is one of the blessed signs of the new life, which life is implanted in us by God Himself.

If our hearts are indeed set on the Lord Jesus Christ to appreciate Him in such a measure, even as the Father does, (and this we shall do, only as we know more and more of His intrinsic worth and excellency); we must then of necessity long to be like Him. The very properties of the divine life dwelling in us, create this heavenly desire. And what can give us such joy, as for the Blessed Spirit of God to make

known to us the prospect which is before us of being like Christ. That there is a moment to which it is our right and privilege to look forward, when this mortal shall put on immortality, and when this corruptible shall put on incorruption:—and the body of humiliation be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. For all this we wait in happy expectancy!

Meanwhile as we wait for the consummation of all our hopes, the mind is sure to be occupied with something, for the heart of man is so constituted. Either our mind will be engaged with our own thoughts of ourselves, or else we shall rise in heart to God's thoughts of Christ, and of ourselves as associated with Him, and His purposes and plans concerning us. May the Lord give us grace and spiritual intelligence to enter into, and to appreciate His thoughts, and to be less taken up with our own preconceived notions and ideas.

In considering any truth of God, as I purpose doing that of our conformity to the image of Christ, it is important to the right understanding of it, that we should begin by looking at the summit of the truth, that we may get a true idea of the scope of the whole. This is God's undeniable and uncontrovertible purpose, to which none can say, "Nay," for He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. We find this in Rom. viii. 29, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of His Son." We must remember that it is neither by watching the working of grace in ourselves or in others, that we can justly arrive at the truth of God's purpose. This is only to be known as He has been pleased to reveal it in His Word. And it is *here* we find it.

Is it not happy at times to cast the eye back to a period before this world was founded, as the Holy Ghost tells us in Eph. i., and to find that it was no sudden hasty thought with God to make us His children, but, ages ago, in the calm serenity of His own being, when He alone existed, before ever the morning stars sang together—*then we were* in His thoughts—yea, more—then He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son—and as with worshipping spirits we wonder and adore such grace, let us remember that this surely was the highest thing for which He could predestine us. His Son was the One who ever dwelt in His bosom, in the very place of the Father's affection, for He was the Son of His love—and blessed be

God, it is nothing short of conformity to the image of *this One* that God has in past ages predestined us. The fact that we have been chosen to be holy and without blame before God in love is rather included in the high truth which treats of our predestination to conformity to Christ's image, than being independent of it. It is not merely that we are elected to be saved from hell, the truth here goes beyond that, for in Rom. viii. 29, we find, that those whom God foreknew would be saved, them He also did predestinate.

If it is asked, "What is the cause or reason of such poor hell-deserving sinners being elected to such heights of glory?" the only answer is, that He who has thus planned and determined concerning us, has done it to the praise and glory of His own most holy Name—His own glory's sake, *must* ever be the secret of His acting; and here the reason is stated to be "that He (Christ) might be the first-born among many brethren." Now, if there had not been other sons, it is plain there could not have been a first-born—so Christ Jesus could not have been the *first-born*, unless He has brethren—even *us*, according to Heb. ii. 11. We *are* to be conformed to the image of His Son, the first-born; as He is holy and without blame before Him in love, so we are to be. This then is *God's purpose*, which we shall soon see accomplished, and oh! what endless joy then. And now as we wait for that blessed moment, having at heart the will of Him who has thus planned for us in divine wisdom, shall we not seek that even down here in our measure *that will* may be carried into effect. For the practical truth of this, we might refer to 2 Cor. iii. 18, which speaks of the conforming power of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

Throughout this third chapter of second Corinthians, the Holy Ghost unfolds to us the ministration of righteousness, bringing it out in striking contrast to the ministration of condemnation. The one giveth life, the other killeth. Both ministrations were glorious, but that of the law was to be done away; and in order that the children of Israel might not stedfastly look to the end of that which is now abolished, Moses put a vail on his face. Thus they could not see the fading away of the glory which lit up his face, which glory represented the glory of the law. This vail still remains on the heart of Israel nationally, so that as yet they know not that the glory of the former dispensation has been done away. In blessed contrast to this, we, with

open (or unvailed) face, behold the glory of the Lord as in a mirror. All that was opposed to God's righteousness has been clean swept out of the way by the cross of Christ, not only our sins and our sin, but ourselves as to our standing in the first Adam. The flesh being utterly corrupt beyond all remedy, God has judged it in the cross. This must be known ere the Christian can abide in God's holy presence at perfect peace. All that was contrary to that holiness is gone, and he now seen as alive in Christ in resurrection.

And now it is for each one to ask himself, what is to be the effect as desired by God upon me, when I see and know Christ in glory? *It is that I may be changed into the same image!* Every truth God is pleased to give us, and whatever He may tell us of Himself, should have this result, it should conform us to itself. It is not given us that our heads may be stocked with knowledge, but that we may carry into effect every truth, which, by the Spirit's teaching, is made ours. The law was graven in tables of stone, but the gospel of a glorified Christ only finds its place in the fleshly tables of the *heart*. This is to be formed to the same image, which is "Christ, the image of God"—the brightness of glory, the express image of His person. It is only by gazing that we become like Him, and as we behold we are changed.

He who effects this, is the Spirit of the Lord. He has come to the Lord's own people, consequent upon Christ's ascension and glorification at the right hand of God. (John xv. 26; xvi. 7.) He comes to us *from the glory*, bringing to our hearts the glad tidings of Christ in glory, and conducts us on to glory. The glad tidings which comes to us from thence—do not stop short of glory, the effect of the message would be incomplete if it did. The whole scene and sphere is one of glory, and nothing else. The blessed Spirit of God takes us right on to glory—from glory to glory. It is thus that we behold the glory of the Lord Christ displayed, as in a glass or mirror. The glad tidings of the ascended Christ's glory, is what is spoken of in these third and fourth chapters.

When a man beholdeth his natural face in a mirror he goeth his way and forgetteth what manner of man he is, but blessed be God when we behold this glory of the Lord, we not only desire to be like Him, but we are changed by its formative power into the same image. I don't think that this means a progressive work of being a little bit more like Christ down here to-day than we were yesterday; for the

one before us is Christ—not attainment or profession—also to-day, I am not to think about yesterday, and how far or near I was from being like Him. But I am to take a whole and living, glorified Christ before me as my patron, and to fashion my ways, words, thoughts, and actions, according to that model, being transformed by the renewing of our mind. It is not that I got so far yesterday, and now to-day go on from where I stopped, but I begin to-day, as if never before to study Christ, and copy Him—yea, to be changed into the same image. And now as we journey onwards, ever with Christ as the object before us, pressing forward toward the mark of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus, let us keep the eye of faith on the coming Saviour, the moment when He shall descend, and we ascend to meet in heavenly glory, and so for ever be with Him. The sleeping saints shall then be “raised in glory,” and we who are alive shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and this very body of humiliation which we carry about with us shall then be fashioned like into Christ’s glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Then, too, shall be fulfilled the word of truth spoken in 1 John iii. 2, “When we see Him as He is, we shall be *like Him*.” This truly will be the full and eternal consummation of all our joy. That which now we look forward to with happy expectation will no longer *then* be our hope. It will then be blessedly realized, and we,

“Undazzled by the glorious light,  
Of that beloved brow,  
Behold, without a single cloud,  
Behold our Saviour now !

Perhaps the next greatest joy to that of seeing Jesus face to face, and being for ever with Him, will be that of being *like Him*—perfectly like Him—the carnal mind which now would ever rise at enmity to that of God no more to trouble us, and we ourselves beyond the possibility of sinning against, or grieving the one whom we love. No wanderings then from that side which was riven for us—no stranger thoughts or departing in heart from Him—no unsanctified desires—no evil propensities or lusts—or ever active flesh, requiring the Spirit’s power to keep it in check. Oh! no, but *then* all His energy shall be concentrated in praising as we should, Him who loves us, and died for us, and washed us in His own

blood. Then indeed the end for which God in the past predestinated us and the present longing of the true-hearted soul, will both be perfectly accomplished, when we see Him as He is, for then we shall be LIKE HIM. H. W. T.

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## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, AS PRESENTED IN THE PARABLES OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

No. 4.

(Continued from page 191.)

So it was with those who heard the teaching of our Lord, who heard His words with the coldest indifference, and who only awoke up to energy when they shouted, "Away with Him, crucify Him!" For besides the prophetic import of this parable as showing what kind of reception His word would meet with afterwards, it has an historical aspect, and describes the way in which the Jews received the preaching of the word of the kingdom from the lips of the Lord Himself. In this case it is the devil who is the active, and, awful to say, the immediate and direct agent in catching away the good seed.

In the two following cases he no doubt is busy, but it is by the means of other things. He acts indirectly, and in the case of the stony-ground hearer it is evidently the *flesh* that is the proximate and immediate cause of unfruitfulness. This is as fatal a case as the wayside hearer, though apparently not so unpromising. Nay, there is a promising appearance, for "forthwith they sprung up." Those of whom this is the type seemed to be in advance of all the others. But it was this very "forthwith" that was the evidence of its worthlessness; for it was the consequence of there being no deepness of earth. There was no root; it soon sprang up, and soon withered.

What is the Lord teaching us here? That a mere intellectual reception of the truth is worth nothing. The mere mind of man is capable of admiring the truth, so far as it is understood. The affections may be drawn by the exhibition of a Saviour dying on the cross; and there may be a profession of faith in Christ. Man believes after a sort (not with the heart—no man can do that of himself), and so he calls and professes himself to be a Christian. But it is only the



acting of his own understanding and natural affection—which are only flesh—and the reception of the word is only superficial. The word, though admired, does not reach the soul, does not probe the conscience. It is not allowed to take root. The natural pride of the heart is not alarmed at being told that in it there dwelleth no good thing. There was no opposition, because the necessity of self-judgment was not felt.

Such may endure for a while, but the testing time comes sooner or later, and then the hollowness of their profession is seen. They are offended. Yet they received the word joyfully. No doubt there is joy and peace in believing. But is joy the only, or, indeed, the *first* effect of bowing to the word? I deny it. Where the work is real the sinner is brought into the presence of God as a guilty, lost thing, conscious of deserving hell, conscious, too, that his sins have been committed against God, and this swallows up every other feeling. David said, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned," but had he not sinned against Uriah? But he was in God's presence, and saw only Him. In many cases he feels extreme terror. In a word, self-judgment is the prevailing, or at least an essential part of his feelings before God. Is this a joyous feeling?

Now, I apprehend that the Lord intends us to understand that in the case of the stony-ground hearer joy was the *only* feeling or sentiment produced in his heart; and so it is given as an evidence that there was no root. On the contrary, where the word takes root there is self-loathing, there is a bowing to the sentence of God against sin. No palliation, no excuses, are permitted in his heart for sin, but rather, in anticipation of God's condemnation, he acknowledges the just sentence of God against himself. Of course there must be a measure of faith in the mercy of God, or hardness of heart and reckless despair would result. But I say that the sense of sin produces horror and self-condemnation, and that there cannot be any feeling of joy or gladness till Christ be seen as the One who suffered in our stead. Nowhere in Scripture do we read of one truly converted to God who received the word joyfully at first. We read in Acts ii. 41, "Then they that *gladly* received his word," &c.; but it is known from the best authorities that the word "*gladly*" is an interpolation. Indeed it seems to me impossible that there could be gladness felt when a soul is first brought by the Spirit into God's presence. Even Job, saint as he was, when he was once brought

there, could only give expression to his own abhorrence of himself when he *saw* God : then, and not before, he said, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." It must be so for the sinner who feels himself in God's presence, in whose light all his deformity and sin are revealed. The Spirit, working in him, gives him God's thoughts about sin, and he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes. I repeat, the very essence of repentance is self-judgment. Of course, true repentance is based upon faith in God's testimony. There may be faith of a human sort in the word, without one feeling of repentance ; but bowing to God's word that I deserve condemnation for ever, and the power to rest upon the blood of Christ for acceptance with God, are two different things. They go together, no doubt—that is, where there is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ there is always repentance towards God. But they are very different. It is only the Spirit of God that produces the former, and where He works He always gives the latter ; and so the word is, "Repent and believe."

What the Spirit produces in man is not a mere change of mind, as repentance is sometimes defined to be. No doubt there is a change. One can conceive of a change of mind without a bowing to God's judgment ; but where there is a bowing to God there must be a change of mind. I deny that repentance unto life is ever found in Scripture as signifying a mere change of mind.

The question is not what the etymological meaning of the Greek word (*μετανοια*) is, but what does the Holy Ghost mean when He uses the word. And that meaning is only, but surely, to be gathered from the context. We see repentance exemplified in the case of the Syro-Phœnician woman, who must confess herself a dog before she gets the blessing ; in the prodigal, who confesses his unworthiness to be called a son—his having "sinned against heaven and before thee ;" and every soul that would know true peace and joy must be brought to the same thing.

Many of those who listened to the words of our Lord were the exact anti-types of the stony ground. At one time they wanted to make Him king ; at another, Jesus Himself rebukes them because they followed Him not for His word's sake, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled ; and at the last, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, there were numerous voices shouting—Hosanna !—Blessed is He that

cometh in the name of the Lord! Here was joy indeed. But what availed it all?—their hearts were untouched; they had no root in themselves. Instigated and excited by the priests and the rulers they cry out for His death, and demand a robber and a murderer—Barabbas—to be released unto them. This was the time when that power which had been around Jesus, and by which He had walked through their midst when they would have thrown Him from the hill, or have stoned Him, was withdrawn, and He gave Himself up (wondrous thought) to the power, and cruelty, and malice of His enemies. As Jesus said, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” The base, ungrateful, fickle mass cried out to crucify Him whom a few days ago they had hailed with hosannas. The sun arose, and forthwith they withered away. What a picture of man!

Alas, it is a condition where some may now be found. The profession of Christianity is wide, and there are many who profess to believe the word of God (and so they do with a human credence) but whose hearts have never bowed to the name of Jesus, and who, if the powers of evil were let loose against the truth would not stand a moment, but would shout against all true and faithful disciples, as the Jews of old against Jesus, as they did against the servant of Jesus—“Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live.”

May the Lord keep us from being moved, faithful and true-hearted to Him, through all trial and difficulty.

## SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

*Q.*—“Eva” asks,—“What did the blessed Lord mean when He said to Peter, “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation?” What is *entering into* temptation? (Matt. xxvi. 41.)

*A.*—The Lord desires His disciples to “watch and pray,” instead of which they slept and prayed not, and when the hour of temptation came they fled; and Peter, who was so confident of his own strength—saying, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee”—most signally failed. What brought him into the judgment-hall? Why did he thus “enter into temptation?”—this was entering into temptation. He had not been told to do so. In verse

58, Peter followed Christ "afar off," and "went in and sat with the servants to see the end." He "entered into temptation." There he was at that moment—flesh unjudged and trusted in—prayer and watchfulness wanting—a moral distance between him and Christ—temptation entered upon, and unhallowed companionship sought. What a fit one was he at that moment to be the sport of Satan.

How often do the Lord's people thus fail? Instead of distrusting themselves, they enter into this or that, and when the time of trial comes, there is failure and a practical denial of Christ. The flesh has been unjudged, and leads them where the Spirit never would have led.

Thus we see many around us—with unjudged flesh—no moral nearness to Christ—temptations of one sort or another sometimes unthinkingly entered upon—an infidel publication opened and read—an association of one kind or other taken up—unhallowed companionship sought, or fallen in with, without divinely given moral courage to resist them—the ear opened to a suggestion of one kind or other which is known to be subversive to divine truth—and thus the poor, weak vessel becomes a stranded one on the shores of infidelity, or the clear divine testimony of one who might have been a faithful, firm, and devoted disciple, lost to Christ, through the machinations of an ever watchful enemy.

All these things, and many more of a like nature, come under the term "entering into temptation." It is the exercise of one's own will and the disregard of the will of the Lord—self-trusted in, and "wisdom from above" unsought.

It would be a useful question to ask oneself, with regard to *everything* in which one is engaged—whether of a religious nature, or the business or other occupations of life,—“Am I sure that Christ has sent me here?—would *He* have me engaged in this association or that occupation?—would He have me read this book or take part in this or that folly?” If one cannot satisfactorily answer before the Lord, and to Him, such questions, depend upon it, we have engaged in that which is the exercise of our own wills, and thus have “entered into temptation.” We cannot count upon the result if we do these things. No doubt, God *will* take care of His own to the end—of this I am sure—but I cannot *count* upon Him if I “enter into temptation.” I may have to learn my folly, like Peter, by a deep and shameful fall. Oh, for a more thorough and growing distrust in self! If

this was more fully felt, we would see but little of the shameful failures we have to mourn.

How can I expect to be preserved from contamination if I enter into some place, or companionship, or occupation which the Lord would not sanction, and to which He would not have me go? As long as I am in the path of *obedience*, I can count with the utmost confidence upon the care and protection of the Lord. He charges Himself with all the rest when I am *there*. But the moment I get out of this path I have left the place where He would have me, and where I could count with all confidence upon His care and love.

Depend upon it, the more we know the more we will distrust self. The more knowledge, the more prayer, the more will our sense of dependence upon the Lord grow and increase, so that we will never move one step till we know His mind and will.

I have answered your question at length, dear friend, with the earnest desire that we may be led to seek the paths of life with a single eye, and avoid "entering into temptation."—"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

## FRAGMENT.

God made Paradise, and man was driven out of it. He made heaven, and man is not in it. Between the two points there is nothing that God owns. He never made the world as it is; *i.e.*, the moral state that the world and man are in.

## THE "MAN OF SORROWS."

O ever homeless Stranger!  
 Thus dearest friend to me:  
 An outcast in the manger  
 That Thou might'st with us be.

How rightly rose the praises  
 Of heaven that wondrous night,  
 When shepherds hid their faces  
 In brightest angel light.

More just those acclamations  
 Than when the glorious band  
 Chanted earth's deep foundations,  
 Just laid by God's right hand.

Come now and view that manger :  
 The Lord of glory see,  
 A houseless, homeless stranger  
 In this poor world for thee.

To God in th' highest glory  
 And peace on earth to find,  
 And learn that wondrous story—  
 Good pleasure in mankind.

O strange, yet fit beginning,  
 Of all that life of woe,  
 In which Thy grace was winning  
 Poor man his God to know

Bless'd babe who lowly liest,  
 In manger-cradle there ;  
 Descended from the Highest,  
 Our sorrows all to share.

Oh, suited now in nature  
 For love's divinest ways,  
 And make the fallen creature  
 The vessel of Thy praise.

Oh love all thought surpassing,  
 That Thou should'st with us be ;  
 Not yet in triumph passing  
 But human infancy.

We cling to Thee in weakness,  
 The manger and the cross—  
 We gaze upon Thy meekness,  
 Through suffering, pain, and loss.

There see the Godhead glory  
 Shine through that human vail,  
 And willing hear the story  
 Of love that's come to heal.

My soul in secret follows  
 The footsteps of His love—  
 I trace the Man of Sorrows  
 His boundless grace to prove.

A child in growth and stature,  
 Yet full of wisdom rare :  
 Senship in conscious nature  
 His words and ways declare,

Yet still in meek submission,  
His patient path He trod;  
To wait His heav'nly mission,  
Unknown to all but God.

But who, Thy path of service,  
Thy steps removed from ill,  
Thy patient love to serve us,  
With human tongue can tell?

Midst sin and all corruption,  
Where hatred did abound,  
Thy path of pure perfection  
Was light to all around.

In scorn, neglect, reviling,  
Thy patient grace stood fast,  
Man's malice unavailing  
To move Thy heart to haste

O'er all, Thy perfect goodness  
Rose blessedly divine—  
Poor hearts oppressed with sadness  
Found ever rest in Thine.

The strong man in his armour  
Thou mettest in Thy grace,  
Didst spoil the mighty charmer  
Of our unhappy race.

The chains of man, his victim,  
Were loosened by Thy hand—  
No evils that afflict him  
Before Thy power could stand.

Disease, and death, and demon,  
All flee before Thy word,  
As darkness the dominion  
Of day's returning lord!

The love that bore our burden  
On the accursed tree,  
Would give the heart its pardon,  
And set the sinner free.

Love that made Thee a mourner  
In this sad world of woe,  
Made wretched man a scorner  
Of grace that brought Thee low.

Still in Thee, love's sweet savour  
 Shone forth in every deed,  
 And showed God's loving favour  
 To every soul in need.

I pause,—for on Thy vision  
 The day is hast'ning now,  
 When for our lost condition  
 Thy holy head shall bow.

When deep to deep still calling,  
 The waters reach Thy soul,  
 And death and wrath appalling  
 Their waves shall o'er Thee roll.

O day of mightiest sorrow—  
 Day of unfathomed grief—  
 When thou should'st taste the horror  
 Of wrath without relief.

O day of man's dishonour,  
 When, for Thy love supreme,  
 He sought to mar Thine honour,  
 Thy glory turn to shame.

O day of our confusion—  
 When Satan's darkness lay,  
 In hatred and delusion,  
 On ruined nature's way.

Thou soughtest for compassion  
 Some heart Thy grief to know,  
 To watch Thine hour of passion,  
 For Comforters in woe.

No eye was found to pity—  
 No heart to bear Thy woe:  
 But shame, and scorn, and spitting;  
 None cared Thy name to know.

The pride of careless greatness  
 Could wash its hands of Thee:  
 Priests that should plead for weakness  
 Must Thine accusers be.

Man's boasting love disowns Thee;  
 Thine own the danger flee—  
 A Judas only owns Thee,  
 That thou may'st captive be.



O man, how hast thou proved,  
What in thy heart is found—  
By grace divine unmoved,  
By self in fetters bound.

Yet with all grief acquainted,  
The Man of Sorrows view,  
Unmoved—by ill unstained,  
The path of grace pursue.

In death, obedience yielding,  
To God, His Father's will:  
Love still its power is wielding  
To meet all human ill.

On him who had disowned Thee,  
Thine eye could look in love:  
Midst threats and taunts around Thee,  
To tears of grace to move.

What words of love and mercy  
Flow from those lips of grace,  
For foll'wers that desert Thee,  
For sinners in disgrace.

The robber learned beside Thee,  
Upon the cross of shame,  
While taunts and jeers deride Thee,  
The saviour of Thy name.

Then finished all in meekness,  
Thou to Thy Father's hand—  
Perfect Thy strength in weakness,  
Thy spirit dost commend.

O Lord, Thy wondrous story,  
My inmost soul doth move;  
I ponder o'er Thy glory—  
Thy lonely path of love.

But oh Divine Sojourner,  
Midst man's unfathomed ill,  
Love that made Thee a mourner,  
It is not man's to tell.

We worship when we see thee,  
In all Thy sorrowing path—  
We long soon to be with Thee;  
Who bore for us the wrath.

Come then, expected Saviour—  
Thou Man of Sorrows, come!  
Almighty, Blest Deliv'rer,  
And take us to Thee, home!

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