

WORDS OF TRUTH.

“The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words:
and that which was written was upright, even words
of truth” (Eccles. xii. 10).

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God known in Majesty and in Grace.

WHAT a moment it is, beloved, when the soul becomes conscious that it has to do immediately and personally with God!

Peter was brought to that moment in Luke v. 8. He was overwhelmed with a sense of the divine majesty, or the glory, which he had just discovered in Christ.

It was that glory which was sinned against in Gen. iii.; and since that day no child of Adam can stand its presence. We all come short of it (Rom. iii. 23).

But, though Peter falls before it, he does not go away from it. The accuser in John viii. retires from the conviction, but Peter, though convicted, falls before Him who had convicted him.

There is a great moral distance between these two states of soul. And, accordingly, the very next moment, the glory that had overwhelmed him, comforts him. "Fear not," says Christ, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

The glory exactly suits itself to Peter's condition, in divine grace, as before it had overwhelmed him in divine majesty; and the amazed Peter becomes the happy Peter.

Why (I ask myself) should I find it harder to stand before the glory in divine grace, than to fall before it in divine majesty?

It is wretched legal flesh and blood, wretched self-righteousness, sad and sore working of the old unbelieving heart. But, oh ! how glorifying to God that the soul overwhelmed by the sense of the divine majesty should rise in the sense of the divine grace !

The Lord, I know, loves a real, true dealing of soul with Himself ; and therefore He is most tender of the sin-burdened conscience, and the war-worn heart of a long-convicted soul. He dwells in the high place with such (Isa. lvii.). But still, He is not fully known till divine grace mingles its healing light with the humbling power of divine majesty.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures.

MANY circumstances testify that the narratives of the evangelists were not written merely by man, but by the Holy Ghost.

For instance, John was one of the three apostles who were with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, an attendant upon the scene of His agony. Nothing could be more affecting or more solemn. John most certainly had not forgotten it, for he relates many other of the circumstances which are not to be found in the other gospels ; for example, that those who

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came to take Jesus "went backward, and fell to the ground"; and yet respecting the Saviour's agony he makes not the slightest mention.

John accompanied Jesus also to the cross; yet he says not a word as to His having been forsaken of God, although he relates a multitude of other circumstances, which prove that the Saviour was as calm there as when he describes Him to us in the garden.

A man who had written the history of the sufferings of the Saviour would not have failed to relate things so deeply interesting, and of which he had himself been an eye-witness.

Matthew also would have related the remarkable incident which occurred in the garden of Gethsemane, of which he was an eye-witness, namely, that they all fell to the ground; but he does not mention it; while he gives an account of the agony of Jesus, and His prayer, although he was not one of the three who accompanied Him at that time.

Now, if you examine these gospels, you will find that this peculiarity, inexplicable as it would be if they were not inspired, becomes quite intelligible when we recognize their inspiration. One and the same author wrote them all. The Holy Ghost, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ, and to show them unto us, furnishes us in John with those circumstances of the history of Jesus which

would bring out the glory of His person as Son of God, the glory of Him "who offered Himself to God" for us. In Matthew He gives that which is needed to make known the suffering Messiah.

The result is, not only harmony between the parts of each gospel, but also between all the gospels; producing a perfect whole; exhibiting the design and the workmanship of one and the same author. This principle is applicable to the entire contents of the four gospels.

I have only called the reader's attention to the garden of Gethsemane and to the cross, as striking instances. One who is well versed in the gospels, and who has spiritual discernment, would know by the manner in which a subject is presented in which gospel it is to be found. Compare the connection between the end of Matt. xxi. and the parable in the beginning of chap. xxii.; also the way in which the corresponding parable in Luke xiv. 16 is introduced, with that of the husbandmen in Luke xx.; and you will perceive that the substance, the form, and the diversities of these parables are in perfect harmony with the design of each gospel.

In Matthew, we have the rejection of Christ in connection with the relation of the Messiah to the Jews; in Luke, the moral order of the events, the acts and ways of the God of grace, founded on the broader, the more moral, and

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the less official basis of the character of the Son of man. The same thing may be observed in comparing Matt. xxiv. and Luke xxi.

There is another testimony to the truth of inspiration, the peculiar character of which deserves the reader's attention. It applies especially to the Old Testament; but it brings out very clearly the difference between the inspiration of the Old and that of the New. This testimony is that the prophets did not understand their own prophecies, but studied them as we might do, as we read in 1 Peter i. 11: "Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister," etc.

The prophets searched into that which the Holy Ghost had spoken through themselves. Their inspiration was so absolute, and so independent of the workings of their own minds, that they inquired into the meaning of that which they uttered, as any of us might do.

This is not precisely the character of the inspiration of the New Testament; but it is not, therefore, the less real. Its character is declared in the succeeding words [in the same passage]: The things which are now "reported unto you by them that have preached

the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ” (v. 12).

“ The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ” leads into all truth ; and thus inspiration acts *in* the understanding and *by* the understanding ; but it is *not* on that account the less inspiration. On the contrary, the apostle Paul preferred the inspiration which acts by the understanding to that which is apparently more independent of it : “ If I pray in a tongue my spirit prayeth ; but my understanding is unfruitful ” (1 Cor. xiv. 14-19).

Dan. xii. 8 gives us an example of that which Peter describes : “ And I heard, but I understood not ; then said I, O my Lord, what *shall be the end of these things ?* And he said, Go thy way, Daniel ; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”

The reader will remember that the passage I have quoted is the one to which the Lord Himself referred the disciples, in order that they might understand it. Now, if the prophet did not understand the revelation he gave, if the prophets searched into the signification of their own prophecies, it is most evident that those prophecies were given through direct and positive inspiration.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

The Gospel of the Kingdom, and the Gospel of the Grace of God.

AS in the ways of God with man we find different dispensations, from Adam onward, so on different occasions it has pleased God to send messages of gospel (or glad tidings) of various import, according to the time and state of the people who were to hear it.

1. In regard to dispensations, we find, first of all, God's ways with man in INNOCENCE, surrounding him with every blessing, caring for him, setting him in the place of dominion over every living creature, and directing and warning him; but he sinned, and fell, and thus acquired a conscience, the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. i. 28, ii. 16, iii. 22).

2. From Adam to Moses man fallen and guilty, and recognized by God as having a CONSCIENCE, ought to have known God from what he saw and knew of God's works and ways; but he degraded himself to become a god-maker, and was wicked in the most loathsome ways (Rom. i. 20-32).

3. From Moses to Christ, God's LAW, or rule for man in the flesh, was in operation among the people of Israel, which demanded righteousness from man to God on the principle of works, and promised life, if obedient to it. This proved all to be "guilty before God," and ended in the people becoming worse idolaters than the heathen, and in the

hatred and rejection of God's only begotten Son (Rom. iii. 19, 20).

4. After the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, He sent down from heaven the Holy Spirit to unite all believers on earth to Himself, the Head, and to one another as "one body," called in Scripture THE CHURCH (or ASSEMBLY) OF GOD (Acts ii., 1 Cor. xii. 13, Eph. i. 22, 23).

5. After the coming of our Lord Jesus to receive us to Himself, and take us to the Father's house, He will bring in another order of things, very different from anything which had gone before. He will come forth in manifested glory, *with* His saints and His mighty angels, in flaming fire, to judge "the living," reign in righteousness, put all enemies under His feet, subdue all things unto Himself and establish His kingdom on earth for a thousand years. This will be the MILLENNIAL AGE, in which Christ will confirm all the promises to Israel, reign over them as David's Son, and be King over all the earth. At its close, He will judge "the dead" at the "great white throne," and deliver up the kingdom, "that God may be all in all" (John xiv. 3, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 2 Thess. i. 7-10, Rev. xix., xx., xxi., 1 Cor. xv. 23-28).

6. Then we know the first heaven and the first earth will have fled away, and will be followed by a new heaven and a new earth in

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which righteousness will dwell, the ETERNAL STATE (2 Peter iii. 13, Rev. xxi. 1).

Now, no one could justly say that these are not different dispensations, or ways in which it has pleased God to deal with men at different times. He has been pleased to test man, instruct man, and bless man in various ways, yet we are happily assured that He changes not, and that His word is for ever settled in heaven, and will never pass away.

It is when we learn what Scripture teaches us as to changes in dispensation that we are able to comprehend something of the reason why we have the word "gospel" (or glad tidings) brought before us on so many different occasions, and with such different meanings. For instance, we read of the gospel which was preached "unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal. iii. 8). In the gospels we have the ministry of "the gospel of the kingdom," by John and Christ, and the twelve apostles.

After the death, resurrection and glorifying of the Son, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, we have Paul saying that he testified the gospel of the grace of God (Acts xx. 24); and in the Book of Revelation, just before the coming out of our Lord Jesus from heaven, and His saints with Him, when He will come in flaming fire to judge all enemies, and put them under His feet, we have the ministry of "the everlasting

gospel" (Rev. xiv. 6). Though the Lord Jesus Christ must be connected with every form of glad tidings or gospel which God sends to men. For how else could He bless sinful people? Yet the difference in the messages has been great, according to the purpose of God and the condition of the people to whom they were sent.

We know from Scripture that John the Baptist was the forerunner of Messiah to the Jewish people (Isaiah xl. 3, John i. 6, 7), and announced therefore that the people should repent, for Messiah was there, and ready to set up the kingdom ("Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"), the promised millennial kingdom (Matt. ii. 2). This was the ministry of "the gospel of the kingdom."

When it was so far rejected that John was cast into prison, Jesus took up the same testimony. He preached "the gospel of the kingdom," and added to it the miraculous power of healing, casting out demons, etc., by which they ought to have been assured that He was the Messiah (Matt. iv. 12, 23).

After this, He called the twelve apostles, and sent them also to preach the glad tidings, that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," giving them power to heal the sick, and cast out demons, by which the Jews should have had further proof of Jesus being the true Messiah, "born King of the Jews."

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Be it observed in all this ministry there is no thought of Christ dying for sinners, not a word as to the necessity of His death and blood-shedding (Matt. x. 6, 7, 8).

It has been said that Paul preached the glad tidings of the kingdom. This is a mistake. He tells us that he preached "the kingdom of God" (Acts xx. 25), which is a different thing.

The announcement of the glad tidings of the kingdom was the joyful news to the Jews that Messiah had come, and was there to set up "the days of heaven on earth," according to the prophets, if the Jews repented, and received Him; and we know that some few of them did. But the preaching of "the kingdom" by Paul and others was that the rightful King over all the earth is coming to judge all, lay claim to all, and in righteousness put down all rule and authority and power.

After the Lord has come, and taken His saints to the Father's house, "the gospel of the kingdom" will be preached again to every nation, before He comes out of heaven to judge, and bring in the kingdom in divine righteousness and by divine power (Matt. xxiv. 14). Those who receive the preachers of it, and show them kindness, will be "sheep," and those who reject them, and treat them unkindly, will be "goats," and will be judged accordingly by the Judge when He sits on His

throne here in kingly majesty, and His "brethren" with Him (Matt. xxv. 31-46).

"The everlasting glad tidings" seems to be the last message to men just before the Lord comes to reign, bidding all to "fear God, and give glory to Him" as the only way of escape from divine wrath in that day (Rev. xiv. 6).

"The glad tidings of the grace of God" is the opposite to law; for, instead of demanding righteousness from man on the principle of works, it reveals righteousness, and brings righteousness from God to man as a free gift on the principle of faith (Romans i. 17, x. 4).

"The gospel of the grace of God" to man is still His power unto salvation to every one that believes. It is founded on the righteous and unsparing judgment of sin in the death of the cross, and reveals the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as forgiving sins, reckoning righteous, justifying from all things, giving eternal life, and bringing into the dear and unchanging relationship of children every one that believes in Jesus; and, having believed, such are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, and thus united to Christ and all other believers in the membership of "one body"; and as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," taught to serve God, and wait for His Son from heaven. All, we repeat, is founded on the blood of the cross.

Knowledge and Grace.

WE easily perceive different measures of attainment, both in knowledge and grace, in the churches of old.

The elevation, for instance, of that at Ephesus was much above that of Corinth.

At Corinth, the apostle had to occupy himself with the correction of various errors and abuses, and was thus hindered from bringing out to the disciples the strong and rich meat of the word. He kept from them that "hidden wisdom" which he had in store for the "perfect," because they were "carnal, babes in Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 3).

But at Ephesus his course was free. He had not to stop in order to correct abuses and errors, but could go on to feed the church with wisdom and knowledge, and reveal to them "the mystery" or "hidden wisdom" which he had to keep back from the saints at Corinth (Eph. iii.).

At Corinth, the Holy Ghost, by the apostle, had to take care of their own things, and show them to them for correction; but at Ephesus He could do His more blessed work of taking of the things of Christ, and showing them for edification and comfort.

So that, in distinguishing the condition of these two churches, I might say that the priest was trimming the lamp at Corinth, using the golden snuffers there for the correction of evil;

while at Ephesus he was feeding the lamp, pouring in fresh oil for the filling and brightening of it with increase of light and grace.

The other churches under the care of Paul occupied, as I judge, certain standings between Corinth and Ephesus; that is, they did not call for the same measure of rebuke as Corinth, nor did they stand so much beyond the necessity of all personal notice as Ephesus. But in the epistles to them we discern a mixed action of feeding and trimming the lamps.

Indeed, I might class the churches in Galatia with that at Corinth, for there such error had entered that the apostle had little to do but to correct and rebuke it, and thus, as it might be, restored the minds of the disciples. But whether it be at Rome, Philippi, Colosse, or Thessalonica, we see the apostle applying himself both to the evil and the good that was among the saints there; and I would shortly look at each of them.

Thus at Rome he has in view to bind Jewish and Gentile believers together; as, among the disciples in that city, there appears to have been the retaining of their several prejudices, which were threatening to divide. A great deal of blessed truth is brought out in the epistle; but the present practical end of it all seems to be to secure the union and forbearance of the saints one toward another. But

there is not any great amount of evil or mischief recognized by him.

At Philippi the church was beautiful for much grace, and for grace, too, that was peculiar to herself. Yet the apostle, in his epistle to that church, evidently alludes to symptoms of disunion which had appeared among them; but because of the other grace that was there, he alludes to this evil with marked tenderness and reserve, often expressing the comfort wherewith he was comforted in them. And this tender style of the apostle, while noticing the evil among the Philippians, should tell us, when we see much of the grace of Christ in a brother, we should remember that, when dealing with evil that may be in him also. It is not that the apostle overlooked the evil at Philippi, but he remembered the grace that was there; and this imparted a chastened and affectionate tone while addressing himself to the evil.

At Colosse the apostle, it is true, feeds the saints with the most precious knowledge, with the richest thoughts of Christ and His fulness. But this evidently was because he feared the entrance of Judaizing principles among them, for which fear he gives us clearly to see that he had good reason; and the only divine corrective of that evil is the knowledge of the sufficiency of Christ for all the necessity both of the sinner and of the saint.

At Thessalonica the truth of the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus had been specially received through the apostle's ministry; and in the epistles to the church there he still feeds them with further light upon that great doctrine. But while he does that, he has also to correct a certain practical error which was peculiar to them.

Thus we clearly discern different conditions in the grace and knowledge of the different churches. And all these things happened unto them for ensamples, as much as the things that happened to Israel in the wilderness; and they are here in the same way written for our learning (1 Cor. x.). And we may bless God that we have this His own inspired answer to so many anxieties and questions that might arise in our hearts while walking one with another.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

The Epistle to the Hebrews never contemplates the Church as such, but the people of God walking in weakness on the earth, and Christ for them a separate Person on high. Union with Christ is not its subject, and it is just this gives it its preciousness. Nor does it speak of the Father, but how we believers stand with God, and how we approach; and that is with a perfect conscience through Christ's one offering, so that the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins.

Names written in Heaven.

LUKE X. 17-20.

“**A**ND the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name. And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy : and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

This statement shows the change of everything. Devils may be subject to you, but the Lord says, That is not the portion for you to rejoice in ; I am now showing My power in another way.

This word, “ I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,” alludes to the time when Satan, the “ accuser of the brethren,” will be cast down (see Revelation xii.). Now he is in heaven ; not in God’s presence, in light inaccessible, but before the throne of judgment : two different things.

When the Lord said to Satan, “ Hast thou considered my servant Job ? ” this proves that when others came before the throne, Satan came also.

The last two verses of our scripture may be contrasted. The one speaks of what can be

seen, power to tread on serpents, etc.; and the other, names written in heaven, what can be known only to faith.

The unseen thoughts of your heart are much more important than what can be seen. The invisible is always more important than the visible.

In this world it is not merely that man is a sinner, but there is the introduction into it of the power of evil. Satan has got hold of this world through man's sin. So in the case of the poor woman it is said, "Whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years" (Luke xiii. 16). But when the Church has been caught up, Satan will be cast down. There was war in heaven (Rev. xii.), but when he is on the earth, he will for three-and-a-half years be raising up the man of the earth against the Lord from heaven. When He comes, Satan's power will be put away. Satan is not put into "the lake of fire" until the close of the thousand years, but into "the bottomless pit." That is just what the devils asked to be saved from when cast out of the man whose name was Legion (Luke viii. 31); "deep" meaning "bottomless pit." The Lord did not cast them down to it, because the time had not then come.

This ability to cast out devils was a great thing. The communicating of the power by the Lord was a power above the immediate

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working of the miracles themselves. It required divine power, and none but that could give the power to others. In the millennium there will not be the power of good and evil together; the latter will be cast out. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee?" (Psalm xciv. 20). The pit shall be digged for the wicked. Satan must be cast out. And when Christ was upon earth, He was presenting Himself in the power of God to bind the strong man, and spoil his goods. It was a wonderful thing to meet a man under the power of Satan, and to cast Satan out. It was an earnest of the "powers of the world to come"; the "world to come" referring, not to heaven, but to this earth being renewed. He was then putting forth the same power that He will exercise fully in the coming kingdom.

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you"; and it was at the point when He was rejected that He said this. He knew what was really going on; and though *He* said peace, they did not say peace to Him. "I give you power . . . over all the power of the enemy." "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." That is the Church's place. When Christ was manifested on earth, it was

a blessed thing; but it is better to be His companion in heaven, as we shall be when He comes to take us; far better to be with Himself and as Himself in the Father's house. We have nothing to do with the earth; our names are not written in the earth; we are kings in it, indeed, but our portion is not in it. He "has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. i. 3). We shall have the inheritance with Him, but it is below us; our hope is to be with Himself above it. The inheritance is the consequence of having this place with Him. We are children of the Father, to be "holy and without blame before Him in love." Now we have our portion according to the riches of His grace, we poor sinners whom He has saved; and we shall be to the glory of His grace in the manifestation of it. The inheritance comes in afterwards. "Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." As though He would say to them, Do not let your minds be filled with things down here, but think of what you have in Me, and with Me.

We find two things brought before us in God's ways: first, the government of this world, that which is still prophetic, connected with the kingdom; and then the Church up in heaven. When the inheritance is spoken of, it is always future; but when our place is spoken of, it is always up in heaven.

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The Lord saw that the present setting up of the kingdom would all fail, and *He* was bringing in a better thing than any kingdom, and He rejoiced in that; for when He gives joy to another, He cannot help having it also Himself. When the thief on the cross asked Him to remember him in His kingdom, He said, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be *with Me* in paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43).

He was gratifying the thief, and also Himself. So with these disciples. He would have them not be rejoicing in the good down here, for it is not good enough. Not only do not be troubled with the bad, but rejoice not in the best thing in this world. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Luke x. 21).

He deeply felt the circumstances, but His soul was up to the source, and He would say, It is quite right that these proud and haughty ones should see they are nothing, and that these poor despised lambs should get the glory. "Even so, Father."

He must bow to the evil, because the time to judge it was not yet come. Evil is going on; people are saying, Where is the God of the earth?

We have to bear it, as the Lord did. We must get our thoughts away from the expectation of having things better down here. The soul that enters into God's thoughts and purposes bows to His will.

The Heavens Opened.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews strikingly illustrates one quality of the Book of God. It may be read in various lights, yet no one ray interferes with another. In six or seven ways this epistle could be read with the greatest ease. . . .

It opens the heavens to you *as they now are*. How blessed is the introduction of such a thing to the heart! You look up, and see the physical heavens above you; but it is only the superficial heavens you see.

This epistle opens the inner heavens to you, not in a *physical*, but in a *moral* character. It introduces us to the glories surrounding and attaching to the Lord Jesus, now accepted in the heavens. We are thus enabled to see the heavens in which He has sat down; what He is about there, and what will succeed those heavens.

When the Lord Jesus was here, as we learn in Matt. iii., the heavens opened to get a sight of Him. There was an object here then worthy the attention of the heavens. He returned;

and the heavens had an object they had never known before—a *glorified Man*.

And now it is the office of this epistle to show us the heavens as the place of this glorified Man. And as in Matt. iii. we get the heavens opened to look down at Christ *here*, so in the Epistle to the Hebrews you get the heavens opened that you may look up at Christ *there*.

Victory over Sin.

READ I CORINTHIANS XV.

THERE are two characters of relationship into which we are brought. One is our union with Christ; and the other [is] our relationship along with Christ to God as our Father, He being the Firstborn of many brethren.

“As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (vv. 48, 49).

This last is the result in glory; but it is founded on the great truth of, “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” It flows from our connection with the Second Man; He, Head of a spiritual race, as the first Adam was head according to the flesh.

This is a different thing from His relation-

ship to the bride, and the headship of the body (see Rev. xxi. 9; Col. i. 18). It teaches us how the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures look at our history in the first Adam, closing that history entirely, and then brings in a new one.

This is not brought out until the Second Man is raised from the dead. He was in person the same before; but He was not head of a spiritual race until He was raised. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). It was only then that He could take such a position with His disciples as to say, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father" (John xx. 17).

All thought of any union as man, with Christ, is wrong. He could not unite Himself with us in sin. He could show compassion; but it was impossible that there could be any connection in the flesh, as men in nature, between us and God.

When Christ takes a new position, outside every position in which flesh could be taken account of, we are united to Him in spirit; but the whole history of man shows the impossibility of connection between man in nature with God. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 50). "And as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you" (John xiii. 33).

VICTORY OVER SIN.

25

Flesh, corrupt and corrupting, cannot enter into glory.

True, flesh works in the believer; but Scripture goes deep, and brings out this truth, "that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18). So [in verse 5] the apostle says, "When we were in the flesh."

I do not know whether you would be able to say that: When I was in the flesh.

If we can say so, our responsibility now is to walk as men in the Spirit. A Christian is not to walk as a man, but as a Christian. There are duties of husbands, wives, children; and the relationships between man and man have to be sustained, of course; but before God I am not looked at as a man in the flesh at all. The flesh tries to hinder. It comes to be a hostile power to what I have from the Last Adam; but if you walk merely as men, you are lost.

Flesh showed its weakness. The word to Adam did not provide for sin, and supposed no lust in man. In the garden of Eden lust came in, sin came in, and the separation was complete between God and man. Adam then became head of an excluded race.

Law, given afterwards, supposed men needing life, but involved responsibility. Man, left to himself, became corrupt before God. The earth was filled with violence (Gen. vi.) Then the Flood came.

Then came the law as a trial of man (Exod. xxiv.) Promise was not a trial of man, but it manifested grace without a question of man. There was no promise to [the first] Adam; the promise was to the Last Adam, the Seed of the woman. God cannot promise to sin. There was no question of responsibility in promise. He gave it to man, and left it. Afterwards the question of righteousness is raised.

We too often may little weigh what the terms of the law imply. Were I to say, If you do this, you will get a fortune, this implies that you have not a fortune without.

You cannot say, Do this, and live, if you have life. When God said to man, "Do this, and live" (Deut. viii. 1), it implied his being dead. Man did not think so; but it was the ministry of death and condemnation, because it demanded obedience, which man could not render. Law does bring out man's guilt; he cannot be subject to the law of God (Rom. viii. 7). But there was another thing that proved his guilt far more thoroughly.

Will they accept God's terms when He came to them in grace? Christ came, and in His life [was] the perfect manifestation of goodness. He came amongst men to do them good, healing the leper, etc. But could flesh find anything attractive in Him? He was an outcast among the people to whom He brought home the goodness and love of God.

VICTORY OVER SIN.

27

When law was given, they were not subject to it; and when Christ came, they would not have Him. Therefore the Lord said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31). "They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (John xv. 24).

Man, tried in every way, is proved to be bad.

In other circumstances, namely, that of the Christian, there is the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the same impossibility of it pleasing God. All flesh shows utter rejection of God Himself, and is proud of itself all the time.

Before God executes judgment, man has entirely cast God off. The wonder of the cross is that He came, the sinless One came, into the very place where flesh is. He who knew no sin was made sin for us (2 Cor. v. 21). He finds Himself in the fully revealed position of man before God; He puts Himself there in grace, and in obedience too.

There was more than that: He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). He was "made sin," and put it away by giving up the life in which He bore it. God deals with Him about sin, and the very life ceases in which He takes it, and then He rises up [from among the dead] (v. 12). God had dealt with it, putting an end to it entirely on the cross. There was an end of the old man; and now it is said, "Reckon yourselves to be

dead," etc. "He that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom. vi. 1-14).

Christ has taken the place of the first Adam in sin. All that I was in, Christ has stepped into, and borne. He rises up, and I have an entirely new position. I am now in Christ. He has closed for ever the history of the flesh (we have it as an enemy, but its history is closed for ever before God), and commenced a place for us in Himself, the Last Adam (v.45).

Christ returned to His place before God, having accomplished righteousness. He is Head of a new race, a family of His own. He has new glory as thus Head of a race. We are livingly united to Him, being in Christ. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." We are not in flesh, but before God in virtue of accomplished righteousness. All God's dealings with man before were grounded on sin having come in; so law, promise, government; until Christ came. Now His dealings with us are founded on righteousness. God has His righteousness before Him in a Man. The Son of man has glorified God on the earth, and God has glorified Him in heaven (John xvii. 4, 5). It is as a Man He is there, though He is much more, to be sure.

I have in Him life and righteousness.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Purposed Harmonies for God's Creation.

I HAVE just been thinking what a purpose there is in the blessed God to unite all the parts of His great work together, and how His purpose has been manifested, though variously, from the beginning hitherto.

And this tells us what He Himself is; how He delights in the harmonies of all things under His care; how their joy and interest in one another is His own complacency in them.

It was thus in Eden. There were harmonies between all the parts of the great system, and the Lord God Himself walked in the garden. Heaven and earth were linked together; they were one though different, and all the creatures here owned the one common lordship of man.

In patriarchal days we find this purpose expressing itself amid all the confusion and enmity which sin had introduced. Abraham and Abimelech meeting at the well of the oath showed, in mystery, Israel and the nations in the distant days of the power of Christ, or in "the world [or age] to come" (Heb. ii. 5). And a more extended exhibition of these purposed harmonies is given in the land of Egypt in the day of the power of Joseph.

The meeting of Jethro and Moses at the mount of God in Exod. xviii., the meeting of Solomon and the queen of the south, also tell

the same mystery in different features of it. Prophets announce it afterwards. The King of Israel is to be the God of the whole earth. The house of prayer in Jerusalem is to be the house of prayer for all nations, as the divided sticks of Ephraim and Judah are to become one again; and even a covenant is to be between man and the beast of the field again, and the parts of the now severed creation are to be so healed that a little child is to play with the cockatrice.

Time would fail to go over the witnesses of this. But the New Testament discovers to us one of these harmonies, and it is by far the most wondrous and excellent of all. It is called, as you know, "the mystery." It is "the Christ" of 1 Cor. xii. It is the one body of which Christ is the head; destined for excellent glory, and for dominion too; destined to shine in the heavenly places, even above angels; and to have authority on the earth in company with the Lord of the earth Himself; but more than that, destined to express His divine delight and desire in the harmonies of the scene before God in the most marvellous and blessed form which they could possibly assume. I mean, oneness between the Sanctifier Himself and the sanctified.

This harmony, this oneness, we get in such scriptures as Gal. iii., 1 Cor. xii., xiv., Rom. xii., Eph. i., iii.; but it is in everything now

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dispensed to the understanding of the saints, for their joy and comfort, and for their divine, spiritual separation from the world.

But I must add: *the Lord will never admit of unity or harmony at the expense of truth or godliness*, or of His own glory. 'The great witness of that is Babel. There the whole family were of one language and of one speech, but because they said, "Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven," the Lord of heaven came down to scatter them.

On the other hand, the harmonies which He purposes will be *the display of His glory*, and the sustainment of truth and godliness; and the greatest, and chiefest, and deepest of them all, the oneness of Christ and His members, is the most glorious expression of His glory. In the sight of this, we can sing with renewed vigour of soul,

" Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee?
O height, O depth of love! "

The tongue of the Egyptian sea shall be dried up in *millennial* days (Is. xi.). The sea itself shall be no more in *new heaven and new earth days* (Rev. xxi.), to effectuate and display this blessed desire of God in the harmonies of creation.

The Inspiration of the Scriptures.

(Concluded).

OUR attention is called to the fact that the Bible is not one book, but a collection of writings by different authors.

It is precisely on this fact that I ground my argument, adding also that they were written at periods very remote from each other.

In spite of this great diversity of times and of authors, there is a perfect unity of design and of doctrine : a unity, the separate parts of which are so linked with, and so entirely adapted to, each other, that the whole work is evidently that of one and the same Spirit, one and the same mind ; with one purpose carried on from the beginning to the end, whatever might be the date of each separate book. And this, not at all by means of mere uniformity of idea, for the Promises are quite distinct from the Law ; and the Gospel of grace is distinct from them both. Nevertheless, its parts are so correlative, and together form so harmonious a whole, that, with the least attention, one cannot fail to perceive that it is the production of one Mind. . . .

Look at GENESIS. You will find in it doctrines, promises, types, which are in perfect harmony with that which is more fully developed in the New Testament ; but in Genesis they are related in the way of narra-

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tive with the greatest simplicity, yet in such a manner as to give the most perfect picture of things which should happen in after ages. Feelings natural to piety (speaking historically) are so related as to possess a meaning which, when we have the key to it, throws light upon the most precious doctrines of the New Testament, and the most remarkable events of prophecy.

Look at EXODUS, and you will find the same thing. Everything is made according to the pattern seen by Moses in the mount, and furnishes us with the clearest exposition we possess of the ways of God in Christ. At the same time the law is given, and yet the law is not imitated in the gospel, which does not so much as contain a copy of it. Nevertheless the law is linked with gospel in a manner which makes it impossible to separate them, and which gives to the authority of this revelation a divine and absolute character. Were it not so, Christ would have died to suffer the consequences of a partially human institution; for He bore the curse of the law. Observe this carefully: it was "the curse of the law" revealed to man, and of which He Himself said that not one jot or tittle should pass away till all were fulfilled. And moreover it was not when reasoning with the Jews upon their own ground that Christ said this, but when teaching His disciples according to His own perfect

wisdom, and solemnly setting before them the principles of His kingdom.

Take LEVITICUS. The details of its sacrifices furnish a light which throws upon the work of Christ rays so bright that nothing could replace them, supplying a key to all the workings of the human heart, and an answer to all its need, such as it is found even among the heathen. These details prefigure every aspect of the work of Christ, as doctrinally unfolded in the New Testament, whether by Himself or by His apostles; yet to the inspired writer they were only Jewish ordinances.

Take NUMBERS, which is the history of the journeyings of God's people through the wilderness. "All these things," says the apostle, "happened to them for ensamples [types], and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. x. 11). Who was it that wrote them for us? Certainly not Moses (although he was the human instrument), but He who knoweth the end from the beginning, and who orders all things according to His good pleasure.

All the circumstances of Christian life are found treasured up in these oracles in so complete a manner that the apostle could say, "They are able to make . . . wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15).

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES. 35

On the other hand the New Testament is equally far from merely repeating the substance of the Old, or from making void its authority. It brings in an altogether new light, a light which (while setting aside a multitude of things as fulfilled) throws upon the Old Testament a radiance which alone gives its contents their true bearing. All this applies to the moral and to the ceremonial law, to the history of the Patriarchs, to the royalty of David and of Solomon, to the sentiments expressed in the Psalms, as well as to other subjects. Is it not *One Mind* which has done all this? Was it the mind of Moses or of Paul?

Assuredly not. Observe also that all this refers to Christ, and to all the various glories of Christ, glories which God alone knew so as to reveal them beforehand, and to give in the history and ordinances of His people, and even in that which is related of the world, precisely that which would serve for the development of all that was to be manifested in His Son Jesus.

Accordingly, what says Peter in Acts ii.? "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David; that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day; therefore being a prophet, and seeing this before, he spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption."

I do not go through other books of the Bible

to furnish proofs of this unity of design, which is manifested in a work wrought by such various instruments, and at periods so remote from each other, a unity realized in such a manner as precludes all idea of its having been intended by the persons who executed it. I only use this fact here in confirmation of the principle which I maintain; but to one who has any knowledge of the Word of God it is an incontestable proof. . . .

In judging of inspiration by the precision of the account, a mistake is often committed as to what should be sought for. The Holy Ghost does not aim at that accuracy which would be needful to prove the truthfulness of man. The Holy Ghost has always a *moral or spiritual* object, the revelation of some eternal principle of truth and grace. Every circumstance which has no bearing upon His object is omitted. He regards not accuracy in that respect.

But the moral accuracy is all the greater on this account, and the picture presented to the conscience much more complete. The introduction of something needful to human accuracy would spoil the perfection of the whole as God's testimony. God does not seek to amuse the mind of man by stories to no purpose, but to instruct his heart by truth.

This might sometimes make it rather difficult to balance the whole as a mere narrative;

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but there are two ways of explaining the cause of a difficulty : the ignorance of him who feels the difficulty, or the impossibility of the thing which has perplexed him. And man willingly attributes to the latter cause that which proceeds from the former.

He who understands the design of the Holy Ghost in what He says seizes the perfection of the Word, where the mind of man is perplexed by a thousand difficulties.

The Church (or Assembly) of God.

“**T**HE first thing that struck me,” said a believer, “as to the truth of the Church, was seeing that Scripture distinguished between Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God” (1 Cor. x. 32).

No doubt this text has helped many others in the same way ; for when we see that the Jews are God’s earthly people in relationship with Him as Jehovah, were called from Egypt to Canaan, given earthly promises, with the hope of an *earthly* inheritance as God’s favoured “nation” ; that “the Gentiles” (as such) never were in relationship with God ; and that the present dealing of God in His surpassing grace is giving eternal life, with the hope of *heavenly* and eternal glory to every one who

believes on the only begotten Son of God, we also see very distinctive differences between the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God.

Not only have believers now the remission of sins, and eternal life given them; not only are they accounted righteous, and become children of God, but, by the gift of the Holy Spirit uniting them to Christ the Head in heaven, and to one another in the membership of "one body," they are brought into what is entirely new. This is not an improvement of Judaism, but a new creation; unlike anything that had been before, inasmuch as our blessings, endowments, and inheritance are spiritual, heavenly, and eternal.

The Church (or Assembly) is spoken of in Scripture as "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22, 23). It is also plainly revealed that all our blessings are *in* Christ and *through* Him; all founded on the death of the cross.

Caiaphas, the high priest, prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation (the Jews); and not for that nation only, but that *also* He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John xi. 51, 52).

The Lord's prayer to the Father was also for the present and eternal unity of believers (John xvii. 21-23). Hence we read that Christ "loved the Church [or Assembly], and gave Himself

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for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish " (Eph. v. 25-27).

But although all our blessings are founded on the sacrifice of Christ, the Church had no existence till Christ was ascended and glorified. The Church being *heavenly* in her calling, blessings, priesthood, and inheritance, it stands in wide contrast with the *earthly* calling, blessings, priesthood, and inheritance of the elect nation of Israel.

Satan's effort from the first has been to mix up Judaism with Christianity, and thus undermine the blessedness of the saints who form the Church of God.

Before the death of Christ, there was no union with Him. He said, " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth *alone* " (John xii. 24); but after His resurrection from among the dead, He could speak of us in relationship with Himself as "brethren," and with the Father as children: " Go to My *brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God "; and He breathed on them, saying. " Receive ye the Holy Ghost " (John xx. 17, 22).

This was not the gift of the Holy Spirit

(which took place afterward), but the communication to them of risen life, life more abundantly than could have been known before His resurrection (John x. 10).

But there was as yet no Church (or Assembly) formed. Christ had said, "I *will* build My Church," and He had accomplished redemption for us; but two things were necessary before the Church on earth could be formed:

1. The Son must be glorified in order as Man to be set in the place of headship.

2. The Holy Spirit must come to accomplish this union; for our union with Christ and with one another in Him, is not by faith, nor even in life, but by the Holy Ghost: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into *one body*" (1 Cor. xii. 13).

Our first thought, therefore, in Scripture as to the actual formation of the Church is that when Christ was glorified, and set at God's "right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," etc., THEN God gave Him to be Head over all to the Church, which is His body (Eph. i. 19-23).

And Christ THERE, as a glorified Man, having received the Holy Spirit, sent Him down on the day of Pentecost, to unite all believers on earth to Him, the Head, in heaven, as "one body."

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The Church in its unity had thus a place on earth so near and dear to Himself that He could speak of the saints as "Me" (Acts ix. 4), and here we are still to serve Christ, honour Christ, and wait and watch for His return from heaven. "We are members [or limbs] of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. v. 30). Marvellous union and blessings! Such is the Church (or Assembly) as God's workmanship, the body of Christ. It is also a house, as God's dwelling-place on earth, "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22).

The Church (or Assembly) of God is presented to us in Scripture in two ways:

1. As the workmanship of God.
2. What it is on earth in regard to man's responsibility.

In the former all is divinely perfect; in the latter there is much of man's failure and corruption.

We read that "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25); we read of "the church of God which is at Corinth," where we find much that was contrary to the Lord's mind.

Unless we keep clear in our minds the difference between God's building and man's building, we shall never have true and scriptural thoughts of the Church (or Assembly) of God; for the Word constantly reminds us of the difference.

Looking at "the body of Christ," formed by the Holy Spirit, it is always the true thing before God. But when those on earth profess to act together on the truth of one body, how wide the contrast often is! For instance, to the Corinthian saints the apostle wrote: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii. 27).

Alas! what a sad spectacle of what was contrary to it this very assembly presented.

Again, looking at the Church of God as a temple, we find that, as the living stones by God's power and grace are put together, it "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. ii. 21). But looking at it on earth as to man's responsibility, evil was associated with it.

It did not cease to be God's temple because man had brought in what was not true; hence the Holy Spirit says to them at Corinth, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16).

We read also of the house of God as composed of "living stones," and "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices"; and in the same epistle "that judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter ii. 5; iv. 17). Man's building must end in judgment; therefore every man is admonished to take heed how he builds, for

“the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. iii. 10-15).

While Christ will not forget that nation for which He died, but will in due time bring it into all its promised blessing on earth, He is meanwhile calling out and building together His Assembly.

Nothing can be dearer to His heart than it. He nourished and cherished it as His own flesh; and when we enter into His thoughts, His feelings, His affections to His Assembly, His care for every member of the Body, His ceaseless ministry on our behalf, and that all the blessing to each individual comprising the Assembly comes from Him the Head, *then* the Church (or Assembly) becomes the chiefest object of interest to us on earth, as it ought to be till we see His face.

Victory over Sin.

(Concluded).

LIFE is in the Son, the Second Man; and I can treat the flesh, and all connected with it, as an enemy. As to that, I am dead; flesh has no place now. I have life in Christ, and [have] died to flesh. I have nothing to say to it, no relationship with God in the flesh. I have to pray against it, fight against it, read,

and use all the means I can against it, but I am not in it.

There may be confusion in the mind, but [there is] not in the relationship. God can have nothing to do with flesh. "Reckon yourselves to be dead," for Christ has died.

It is not said, Die, to the flesh. The flesh will keep itself alive as long as it can. It will try to mend itself, try to be better. There would be no sense in telling the flesh to die. But Scripture says, "*Ye are dead*" (Col. iii. 3). Flesh has been judged in Christ, and therefore I am entitled to say, I am dead, and am a new man. Then walk in the Spirit, walk as Christ walked, as the Second Man, not as the first.

You cannot get back to innocence, the uprightness of creation. True, you are upright, if in the Spirit; but more, righteous and holy. All this is equally true about sins. As surely as the first Adam was turned out of the earthly paradise, and became head of a race, so He, the Second Man, is Head of a race for the heavenly paradise.

Faith takes absolutely what God says. Where does it take its place? Half-way, or entirely, with Christ? Flesh never can take its place before God. Faith says, I have no place before God, but in Christ Himself. He is righteousness on the throne of God. Any half-saviour or half-place would not do. We grow up into His likeness; but our place before

God is the same at first. Christ's life upon earth is a perfect pattern for us, manifesting God in all His ways.

Our position before God is one of full favour. And we have the hope of glory before us. How it elevates the heart; not us! Grace humbles us, but elevates the heart. I have boldness before Him in the day of judgment (1 John iv. 17). When we reach the heavenly tribunal, we shall be like Him, the heavenly One (1 John iii. 2).

Grace alone does it. It enables us to discern between flesh and spirit; not only between what is right and what is wrong; but we can say, That is flesh; or, This is spirit. It may look very fair, but if it is flesh, it comes to nothing. If all the world thinks a thing good, that is not Christ, and I would not believe it. If a man walks with the Lord, the flesh is judged. There are the different growth of the babe, the young man, the father; but if we walk with Him, we discern what a thing is. The flesh is very subtle, but it will not last out when the Lord tries me; the wood, hay, and stubble will not stand. Gold is a rarer thing in the world than wood, hay, and stubble, but it lasts longer (see 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13).

Can you then say, "When I was in the flesh" (Rom. vii. 5), with the very distinct consciousness that you are not in it now? Then you are called not to walk as if you were in it.

The Spirit has not a fair show. You cannot go on with Christ; you may walk with Christians, but you cannot walk with Christ without the power of the life in exercise; not going to look for the power, but having it.

May the Lord give us to know what it is to be in the Spirit, and not in the flesh! It may try the conscience, but the end will be peace and joy.

Knowledge and Grace.

(Concluded).

IN what I have said, I may not have altogether rightly discerned the standings of the several churches; but I have no doubt of the fact that they were different.

I speak of the churches, as known by the epistles addressed to them severally. Into some of these lamps of the sanctuary more oil had been poured than into others. The fact which I have already noticed clearly shows this: that the apostle withheld from the Corinthians the revelation of the mystery which he so fully made known to the Ephesians.

And this at once shows how impotent and unwarranted the requisition is, that the minds of all the disciples should be found exactly according to one measure and standing before the fellowship of the church can be allowed or

administered. Nay, so far from this, I am free to believe that if a member of the church at Ephesus had visited Corinth, he would have found them so concerned with questions and strifes which had never troubled him or his brethren at home as might have left him in doubt respecting them. And so one going from Corinth to Ephesus would have found them so occupied with such truth which he had never heard of at home, that he might have suspected, in modern language, that they were all in the clouds at Ephesus. I can thus suppose, from their different measures of light and attainment in Christ, that they might not well have known what to do.

Now, I believe we see among the saints at present what we thus might have seen among the churches of old; we have our Ephesian and Corinthian difficulties still. The truths received by some disciples are treated as mere speculation by others, and the condition of some is low and doubtful.

The large and blessed mind of God which filled the apostle could, of old, survey them all, and provide for them all, and feed them at Ephesus and trim them at Corinth. But we are weak and narrow-hearted; and the only result commonly is to walk in mutual distance and suspicion. Thus we do not understand one another's speech, and we are scattered.

But better is it to be scattered than to be

brought together on the terms of any bond short of God's own bond in the Holy Ghost. Whereto we have already attained, in that let us walk by the same rule, hoping for more; but let us not force beyond that by any fleshly compacts. The fear of God must not be taught by the commandment of men.

In connection with this I would notice the state of Job and his three friends; for I believe that it illustrates the same thing which this state of the churches does. Job could not understand the truth which was in their thoughts, nor could they allow that which he had of God's mind in his. They were but partially in the light, and, through the remainder of darkness that was in them, they mistook the way, and jostled each other.

And the correction lay only in God, and in the end He applied it. They were all accepted. He proved Himself the adequate Healer of all their divisions, as He will by-and-by join the whole of the heavenly family as the Bride in the mansions on high, and unite the two sticks of Ephraim and Judah in the earth below.

The largeness of the mind of God contains the remedy; but nothing else does. That mind may express itself forth from the whirlwind, or by the ministry of an apostle; but however that be, it bears the remedy with it. The Lord, who can with one hand separate the chaff from the wheat, with the other can gather up all the

scattered grains that are now strewing His field in shameful disorder, and find room in His garner for them all.

And this comforts while it admonishes. It is not that we are to confound the chaff with the wheat. It is as much of the Spirit of God to say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha," as to say, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (1 Cor. xvi. 22; Eph. vi. 24). It is as much of the testimony of God to say, "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life," as to say, "He that hath the Son hath life"; and "If any man preach any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (1 John v. 12; Gal. i. 8).

But still let us know that there have been different measures of attainment among the saints, and let our personal and individual care be so to walk in light and grace ourselves as not to give occasion either to the enemy to speak reproachfully, or to our brethren to speak doubtfully of us. And let us have our hearts and consciences in lively exercise before God, with a purpose to follow our light, lead us where it may, in the grace and fear of the Lord. But when these are the springs of the personal movement and course of each of us, we have, though in many things differently minded, the materials of both safe and blessed communion.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS IV.

SCRIPTURE speaks of man in his natural state in two ways, namely, alive in sins, as in the Epistle to the Romans; and dead in sins, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

As to sins, and as to having sinful lusts, man is alive enough. Plenty of activity and energy for self-pleasing and for sin, but nothing for God. Any vanity, or amusement, or dress, or what not, is preferred to God. For sin, he is alive; for God, he is dead, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1).

It is the same condition, but looked at in different aspects; and in order to be delivered from this condition, two things are needed. As dead in sins, he must be quickened; a new creation is necessary. As alive in sins, death must come in; he must die. There is no other remedy or way of deliverance before God but death.

This side of the truth we get in Romans, where the death of Christ is presented as meeting man's guilt, and death with Christ, as the deliverance from our state (Romans vi. 4). When a man is dead, you cannot say he has evil lusts and passions, or a will of his own. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans vi.

11). There is no remedy for being alive in sins but death.

Ephesians gives us the other side of the truth. There we are seen as "dead in trespasses and sins"; and God quickens and raises us up together with Christ. It is an entirely new creation.

The Epistle to the Colossians gives both aspects: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body [of the sins] of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. ii. 11-13).

As alive in sins we have died with Christ and are buried with Him, as in Romans. We thus get clear of the state we were in, for we have died out of it, and are brought into a new place in righteousness by virtue of Christ's resurrection.

As dead in sins we are quickened together with Him, as also taught in Ephesians.

Thus the Epistle to the Colossians goes, as it were, between the two. We are taken farther than in Romans; because in Colossians we are spoken of as being raised with Him,

which the Epistle to the Romans does not teach. But Colossians does not present us as seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, as Ephesians does. Colossians directs us to Christ who is there, and tells us to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. iii.).

Now, all this was revealed to the apostle Paul, and declared by him in the gospel he preached. We learn the character of that gospel from chapter iv. of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Reading that chapter in company with chapter iii., we learn that there is now no veil on the glory of God, as in Moses' case.

If the glory is hid, it is hid from the minds of unbelievers; the effect and work of Satan being to blind men's minds to it. See verse 4 of chapter iv.: "In whom the god of this world [that is, Satan] hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." This is the action of "the god of this world," and he does it by means of men's evil lusts and desires.

The gospel is "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (not simply the glorious gospel of Christ, but) the revelation of His glory who had been on the cross bearing sins, but who is now glorified at God's right hand. The glory of God shines in His face, and there is no veil on this. All about God has come out; He no longer hides Himself as He did for-

merly, dwelling in "the thick darkness." So that if God is not now seen and known, the veil is on man's heart, not on God's face.

The blinding of Satan is not exactly because of the rejection of the gospel, but rather in leading man to reject it. The point is, that there is no veil now, except on the human heart; and it is in contrast with Moses, who put a veil over his face. When he came out to the people from the presence of God he put the veil on, because they could not bear the glory of his countenance; not even that little reflection of the glory of God which shone in his face (Exodus xxxiv. 33, 35). Man came "short of the glory of God"; and when only its reflection was brought before him, he could not endure it, connected as it was with the law, or God's claim on him.

But now the glory shines "in the face of Jesus Christ," and there is no veil upon it. Moreover, there is not, nor do we need, a veil upon our face, but are like Moses in Exodus xxxiv. 34, who had no veil on when he went in before the Lord. He turned to the Lord, and took the veil away. Israel's heart shall turn to the Lord, and then the veil shall be taken away from them (2 Cor. iii. 16).

We do not wait for that day, but even now, "with open [or unveiled] face," we behold the glory of the Lord. And not only are we free to do this, but we love to do it, for it shines in

the face of Him who died for us, and put away all our sins. Every ray of it tells how completely the work was done; for, though He was once on the cross, and our sins were laid on Him, He is now in the glory; and certainly has not got our sins on Him there.

In the case of Moses, the glory was connected with the law, or God's requirement from man; and therefore man could not bear it; but in the gospel it shines in the face of Him who died for us. Christ has been made sin for us. He is now in the glory; and we, beholding with affection and intelligence the glory in Him, and taking delight in it, are "changed into the same image, from glory to glory" (v. 18).

We see this in Stephen. When he was being stoned, he "looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing" (Acts vii. 55). Christ filled his vision; and see how like he is to his Lord. He does not think of the stones, but calmly prays the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit (as Jesus committed His spirit to His Father), and prays for his murderers, as Jesus did.

Israel "could not look to the end of that which is abolished" (2 Cor. iii. 13). They could not even understand the glory which was in the ordinances, as a figure of that which was better and permanent. The whole system ordained by the hand of Moses was veiled to their eyes, and the people fell under the letter

that "killeth," even in that part which was a testimony of things to be spoken afterwards.

Occupied with "the letter" of the covenant under which they were, they did not see that all the types and shadows, the legal ordinances, pointed to One yet to come. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6). "Now the Lord is that spirit," v. 17 (not "spirit" with a capital letter), and this they did not apprehend.

The institutions under the law looked on to Christ, though even in the grace part of them there was the veil, a standing witness that God had not revealed himself, and that there was no way for man to approach His immediate presence. Under the law God did not come out, and man could not go in. The law came out, and the prophets came out; but God Himself was hidden behind the veil.

In Christ, of course, God has come out, as He says in John xii. 46, "I am come a light into the world." There God had come out, but man could not yet go in. Faith could say, "We beheld His glory"; but redemption must be accomplished in order to enable man to go in before God. This having now been done, we see a Man in the glory, "crowned with glory," and God's glory in His face. Now all is out: God is fully revealed, and man enters the glory. The veil is rent "from the top to the bottom" (Matt. xxvii. 51). God has

come out, and man is gone in, and can go in.

Paul gave out the things of the gospel as pure as he received them in (2 Cor. iv. 2). He did not corrupt the doctrine, but manifested it in all the purity and brightness in which he had received it.

Not only was the glory of God fully revealed with open face in Christ, but it was also manifested without a veil in the pure preaching of the apostle. This ministry, which was the power of the Spirit of God acting in the chosen instrument, made man responsible for submission to this glorious Christ; and when Christ was thus proclaimed, there was either submission of heart, or the blinding of Satan.

We cannot take this ground as to the *power* of our preaching; but as to the *subject* of it, we ought to be able to do so. I may preach the gospel in a place without effect, and another may come and present it with greater power, and the people be saved.

Still I might, in a general way, say, If you do not receive the gospel I preach, you will be lost for ever.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Present Victors.

CHURCH of God! as faithful watchmen,
Let our beacons broadly blaze;
Sure of conquest with our Captain,
On our foes we'll fearless gaze.
Present victors! present victors!
Shouts of triumph let us raise.

Oh! may we, as faithful brethren,
Mourn the widespread ruin round;
Sigh o'er all our sad condition,
While we still maintain our ground.
Present victors! present victors!
Ever in our Conqueror found.

Oh! may we, a faithful priesthood,
Love and truth together blend,
With "fresh oil" each day anointed,
For our "holy faith" contend.
Present victors! present victors!
Strong in our Almighty Friend.

Oh! may we, the Bride of Jesus,
Spotless, lovely, sanctified;
For His joyful advent waiting,
In His power and love "abide."
Present victors! present victors!
We SHALL soon be glorified.

The Path of Jesus.

THESE chapters (John xi. and xii.) show us in what different channels the Lord's thoughts flowed from those of the heart of man. His ideas, so to speak, of *misery* and of *happiness*, were so different from what man's naturally are.

The eleventh chapter opens with a scene of human misery. The dear family at Bethany are visited with sickness, and the voice of health and thanksgiving in their dwelling has to yield to mourning, lamentation, and woe. But He, who of all had the largest and tenderest sympathies, is the calmest among them; for He carried with Him that foresight of resurrection, which made Him overlook the chamber of sickness and the grave of death.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He abode two days longer in the place where He was. But when that sickness ends in death, He begins His journey in the full and bright prospect of resurrection. And this makes His journey steady and undisturbed. And, as He approaches the scene of sorrow, His action is still the same. He replies again and again to the passion of Martha's soul, from that place where the knowledge of a power that was beyond that of death had, in all serenity, seated Him. And though He have to move still onward, there is no haste. For on Mary's arrival He is still in the same

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place where Martha had met Him. And the issue, as I need not say, comes, in due season, to vindicate this stillness of His heart, and this apparent tardiness of His journey.

Thus was it with Jesus here. The path of Jesus was *His own*. When man was bowed down in sorrow at the thought of death, He was lifted up in the sunshine of resurrection.

But the sense of resurrection, though it gave this peculiar current to the thoughts of Jesus, left His heart still alive to the sorrows of others. For His was not *indifference*, but *elevation*. And such is the way of faith always. Jesus weeps with the weeping of Mary and her company. His whole soul was in the sunshine of those deathless regions which lay far away from the tomb of Bethany; but it could visit the valley of tears, and weep there with those that wept.

But again: when man was lifted up in the expectation of something good and brilliant in the earth, His soul was full of the holy certainty that death awaits all here, however promising or pleasurable; and that honour and prosperity must be hoped for only in other and higher regions. The twelfth chapter shows us this.

When they heard of the raising of Lazarus, much people flocked together from Bethany to Jerusalem, and at once hailed Him as the King of Israel. They would fain go up with

Him to the Feast of Tabernacles, and ante-date the age of glory, seating Him in the honours and joys of the kingdom. The Greeks also take their place with Israel in such an hour. Through Philip, as taking hold of the skirt of the Jew (Zech. viii.), they would see Jesus, and worship.

But in the midst of all this, Jesus Himself sits solitary. He knows that earth is not the place for all this festivation and keeping of holy day. His spirit muses on death, while their thoughts were full of a kingdom with its attendant honours and pleasures. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone."

Such was the peculiar path of the spirit of Jesus.

Resurrection was everything to Him. It was His relief amid the sorrows of life, and His object amid the promises and prospects of the world. It gave His soul a calm sunshine, when dark and heavy clouds had gathered over Bethany; it moderated and separated His affections, when the brilliant glare of a festive day was lighting up the way from thence to Jerusalem. The thought of it sanctified His mind equally amid griefs and enjoyments around Him.

Resurrection was everything to Him. It made Him a perfect pattern of that fine prin-

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ciple of the Spirit of God: "They that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not" (1 Cor. vii. 30).

Oh for a little more of the same mind in us, beloved! a little more of this elevation above the passing conditions and circumstances of life!

May the faith and hope of the gospel, through the working of the indwelling Spirit, form the happiness and prospects of our hearts!

A Worshipper and a Workman.

READ 2 TIMOTHY II.

VERY serious damage is done to souls by displacing truth, and confounding things which God has made to differ.

If a man teaches plain and positive error, we may be on our guard against him; but if he comes with misplaced truth, we are far more likely to be ensnared.

Thus, for example, there are terms made use of in the chapter before us, which only apply to one who "has passed from death unto life"; as "a workman," "a good soldier," "a sanctified vessel."

If these be applied to one who has not yet

rested his burdened conscience on the all-sufficient sacrifice of the cross, he will, assuredly, be plunged in hopeless confusion and perplexity. If a helpless sinner casts his eye toward the door of the Father's house, and finds it garrisoned by the "ifs" and "buts" and conditions of a cold and dark legality, he must retire in despair.

And, yet, how often is this done! How often are the responsibilities which devolve only upon the true believer pressed upon the conscience of the unregenerate! The effect of this unskilful division and application of the word is most deplorable. Anxious spirits are driven back, burdened consciences have their grievous yoke made more grievous still, hearts that have long sighed for peace, and struggled hard to find it, anywhere and everywhere but in Jesus and His precious blood, are bowed down in hopeless sorrow; all by the system of confounding the worshipper and the workman.

How important, then, to distinguish them! How important to show the conscience-smitten sinner that the work which is to make him a worshipper was finished, over eighteen hundred years ago, on the cross! How needful to lead such a one entirely out of himself, to fix the earnest and believing gaze of his soul upon "the one offering" of Jesus Christ "once"! It is utterly impossible that true, solid, eternal peace can be enjoyed, or true

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spiritual worship presented, until the conscience is purged by the blood on the cross. I must know, not only that all the claims of my conscience, but that all the claims of God's throne, have been perfectly answered by One who died in my stead, ere I can breathe freely, walk at ease, or worship within the veil. There is no *if*, no *but*, no condition. The door is thrown open as wide as the sinner's heart could desire. His nature, his condition, and all his heavy liabilities have been divinely met in the cross. God can say, "Deliver him from going down to the pit," not because he has kept all My commandments, nor even because he has earnestly tried but reluctantly failed to keep them, nor yet because he has sincerely repented and purposes to lead a new life; no; but because "I HAVE FOUND A RANSOM." Here is true peace. God knew the exact amount of ransom required, and He has Himself found it, found it all, found it for *me*.

Reader, rest here! See the full amount of ransom told out beneath the eye of infinite holiness in the life-blood of Jesus! See it! hear it! believe it! rest in it! You are not asked to throw the weight of a feather into the balance to make up the full amount. Jesus has paid all; and as the eternal Father raised Him from the dead, and enthroned Him at the right hand of the majesty in the highest

heavens, He, as it were, declared in the audience of all created intelligences, He sounded abroad through the entire universe, "*I have found a ransom.*"

It is needless for you to say, "I can find no rest, I am so terribly bad. I try to live better, but it is all the same. The more I try, the worse I am. I try to keep the commandments; I attend the public ordinances of religion; I sometimes hear as many as three sermons on the Lord's Day. I do all I can, but yet I have not got peace; I am not happy, I do not know that my sins are forgiven."

Dear friend, all this is "I." You must look away from this poor, miserable, guilty, hell-deserving "I" altogether. God says, "I have found a ransom." Has He found it in you, or out of you? Has He said, "I have found ninety-nine parts of the ransom, and you must find the hundredth"? Ah! no; He has found it ALL. He has done all that He knew to be necessary, and He tells you "the glad tidings" in order that you may "hear and live."

Do not, therefore, read another line of this article until your weary heart has found sweet repose in God's ransom. He does not ask you to pay a farthing; but He tells you He has paid all. Take Him at His word, confide in His love, lean on His ransom. May God the Holy Ghost open your eyes to see, and your

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heart to understand and believe, the things that make for your eternal peace. Then, but not until then, you will be a worshipper, a purged worshipper. And, moreover, it is only when you are a purged worshipper that you can be a purged workman. To attempt to be a workman before you are a worshipper is to reverse God's order, and to make shipwreck of everything. You must put things where God puts them, and leave them there. It was when the leper was pronounced clean that he began to wash his clothes (see Lev. xiv. 8). Had he attempted to do so before, he would have polluted the water instead of cleansing himself. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1).

This is the way to be a purged workman, a sanctified vessel, an approved servant. "If," says the apostle to his son Timothy, "a man purge himself from these [that is, the dishonourable vessels in the great house], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. ii. 21).

To be purged, as to my conscience, by the blood of Jesus, is one thing; to purge myself, by the powerful activities of the divine life within, from the defilement of the scene around me, is quite another.

These things must be kept distinct. To confound them is to derange the entire Christian character, to rob the soul of peace, and destroy the testimony.

The Christian is called to carry on a constant struggle. The moment his soul has found peace in Jesus, this struggle begins. It is when the shout of victory falls fully and clearly on the ear of faith that the battle begins. This may puzzle nature, but faith understands it perfectly. The believer is at once a conqueror and a combatant. He plants his foot upon "the foundation of God," which "standeth sure," so sure that all the enemy's power cannot shake it; and in the enjoyment of the peace which that sure foundation yields, and not in a spirit of bondage, doubt, or fear, he "departs from iniquity."

And what is his object in thus departing, thus purging himself? Is it that he may be a worshipper? By no means. He must be that ere ever the struggle begins. What then? That he may be a purged workman, a meet vessel, an instrument which "the Master" can take up, and use. This is simple enough; and it is as practical as it is simple.

Christian reader, you have tested the reality of a purged conscience; are you calling on the Lord "out of a purged heart"? Are you struggling to "flee youthful lusts, and follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them

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that call on the Lord out of a purged heart " ?

You may, perhaps, feel disposed to say, " I see such hopeless confusion and division all around me, that I know not with whom to follow, or where to find a path for my feet."

Well, that may be ; but remember this, if the professing Church were broken up into ten thousand times as many more fragments, if controversy, division, and confusion were to roll like a desolating tide over the entire of Christendom, yet is each Christian man solemnly responsible to depart from iniquity the moment he sees it. He is called to " purge himself " from dishonourable vessels. And, moreover, it is in proportion as he so departs, so purges himself, that he will be " meet for the Master's use."

Remember, the question here is not as to peculiar views or opinions in reference to matters ecclesiastical. No ; it is far deeper, far more personal, far more practical. Wherever you are, you are called to this mighty struggle, this noble work of purging yourself, in order that Christ may use you. How are you responding to this call ? Are you sighing after greater nearness and likeness to Christ ? Are you sick of the cold and heartless profession of the day, the withering formalism that seems to be settling down upon the professing Church ? If so, press on ! press on ! Let " upward and onward " be the motto dis-

tinctly inscribed upon your whole course and character. Be not satisfied with anything short of AN ENJOYED CHRIST.

This is your privilege. See that you live up to it. Do not ask, "What harm is there in this or that?" But ask, "How can I enjoy most of Christ?" Seek to breathe the atmosphere of His presence, to drink into His spirit, to walk in His footsteps, to grow in His likeness.

Finally, let us all remember that it is *the energy of attaining*, and not *the measure of attainment*, which leads to communion. If an apostle met a babe in whom he perceived the energy of attaining, he could have communion with the babe. But if the apostle were to make his measure of attainment the ground of fellowship, the babe would be shut out.

The question is not, Do you agree with me? but, Are you following hard after Christ?

Is it Independency, or Keeping the Spirit's Unity?

IN the professing Church we find *Nationalism*, a thing totally unknown in the New Testament; *Dissent*, equally unknown in the sacred writings; and those who are *professedly gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, some of whom are advocating principles of

Independency, and others seeking to *keep the Spirit's unity*.

The question is, Which is in accordance with the mind of Christ, as revealed in His Word?

By Independency, which is in widest contrast with keeping the Spirit's unity, we understand that practical condition when each meeting acts independently of other meetings, and this too as to receiving and excluding.

It has not been uncommon for some to have been received in one of such meetings who would not be received in another of such meetings.

This shows at once that they do not wait on the Lord Jesus Christ as in their midst, are "not holding the Head," not depending on the Holy Spirit's guidance and power, nor seriously regarding the precious truth of the unity of the Church of God.

Independency acts as if there were many bodies, instead of "one body"; and as if God's Assembly were guided by different spirits, instead of by "one Spirit."

When, however, we speak of *keeping the Spirit's unity*, we mean our walking and acting according to the Holy Spirit's instruction touching God's Assembly on earth, and therefore toward every believer; and as there is but one Assembly, "one body," what has been judged to be the Lord's mind in one meeting

by those gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ "to hear what the Spirit saith," is necessarily accepted in all the other meetings. Nothing can produce this unity but the Holy Spirit, and there must be unity of thought and action with such, for there is "one Spirit." Each meeting thus acting represents the whole Church of God, and all on divine ground bow to the judgment as of the Lord. To refuse it is *Independency*, both dishonouring to the Lord in our midst, and the present power and action of the Holy Spirit.

It is impossible that He could direct saints, however widely separated, if truly gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to act in opposite ways under the same circumstances; and we must never forget that His sphere of action is not merely in a meeting here or there, but in and for the whole Church or Assembly on earth.

Hence one solemnly "put away" in one place is not only outside that meeting, but put away from all the privileges of Christian fellowship in every place. The apostolic direction by the Spirit was, "Put away *from among yourselves* that wicked person" (1 Cor. v. 13).

Looking at the Church, or Assembly of God, on earth, as the body of Christ, it is always perfect before God. Faith always recognises this.

Again, as the work of God progresses, and one living stone after another is added to His building, it "groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. i. 23; ii. 21).

But when the Church on earth is looked at in relation to man's responsibility, as God's corporate witness, there has been the most appalling failure. It is now in a state of ruin.

Thank God, Scripture has foreseen and provided for such a sad state of things, and, though it never promises reconstruction, it gives great encouragement to such as go back to that which was at the beginning of Christianity, humbly acknowledge our general departure and unfaithfulness, and thankfully accept every thing of God that remains. Any other course must either be *Independency*, or manifestly *sectarian*, and cannot therefore be of God.

While, alas! it is evident that man's arrangements and organization have practically so grieved and quenched the Spirit of God, who abides with us for ever, as to deny "the *power* of godliness," nevertheless our obligation to keep the Spirit's unity has never been abrogated, but is as binding as ever to any two or three or more who may be gathered together in our Lord's name.

Such as are practically in it know its deep reality; for it still remains true that "one Spirit" indwells and unites to Christ the Head

in heaven all the members of the "one body" on earth; and "the unity of the Spirit" is the unity which flows from "one Spirit" indwelling and acting in them as belonging to God's Assembly.

Such do not merely go back to the Reformation, and accept a partial recovery of long lost truth, but they return to that which was from the beginning of Christianity, as taught by the apostles; and they find they have not to *make* a unity, but to *keep* the Spirit's unity.

The "one loaf" on the Lord's Table constantly reminds us of this unity; "for we being many are one bread [loaf], one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf" (1 Cor. x. 17). The Spirit's unity is so far *expressed* by our breaking and eating of the same loaf, as one with all the members of the one body, that if all were hearing and subject to "what the Spirit saith" in the Word, the Spirit's unity would be *kept* by us. It is the opposite to *Independency*.

No doubt every gathering of saints is set in its own direct responsibility to the Lord; but while there is this local accountability to Him, and may be different in different places, as we see in the Epistles, yet the members of the body in one place are never in the Spirit's mind detached from all the other members on earth who comprise the "one body." Hence we find in our Lord's addresses to the seven

assemblies, in the second and third chapters of the Revelation, that each assembly, and each person in every assembly, is held accountable by the Lord as to its walk and state, yet never *independently separated* by our Lord from present care and interest in all saints. Hence each person is individually admonished "to hear what the Spirit saith to the ASSEMBLIES."

We must never forget that it is *the Spirit's* unity which we are admonished to keep. It must, therefore, be a holy unity in separation from evil, for He is "the Holy Spirit." It must also be according to the *truth* of God, for the "one Spirit" is the Spirit of truth, and guides into all the truth.

The whole Church of God on earth is so practically considered in Scripture as one Assembly, that "gifts" are given by Christ the Head, not merely for one or more congregations, but for edifying or building up "the body"; and we are told that "God hath set some [not in a congregation merely, but] in the Church," or Assembly, the whole Church; "first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers," etc. (Eph. iv. 12; 1 Cor. xii. 28).

It is clear, therefore, that no gathering of saints can be according to our Lord's mind, which does not embrace care, interest, and sympathy, according to the truth, for "all saints"; and consciously never detached from

all saints; although the unscriptural ways of many may forbid those who are faithful from walking with them (2 Tim. ii. 21).

But we may be sure that this interest in all saints, and keeping of the Spirit's unity, can never be in practical action without our "holding fast the Head"; by which we understand being in such communion with Christ as to be holding His thoughts, His feelings, His affections, and interests towards all the members of His body.

We have long been persuaded that nothing else will enable us to go onward in holy liberty and peace in a day of evil. Many pray for all saints, and rightly so, because they are taught of God to love all saints; but we do not believe our heart-felt interest and sympathy will be toward all saints according to His mind unless we are in communion with Christ the Head about them as the Spirit instructs us in the written Word.

Are we then holding fast the Head? It is a solemn question for the conscience.

If *Independency* is man's activity and selfishness, thus setting aside the mutual flow of those sweet thoughts, affections, and care for all the members of the "one body" according to the Head, who never fails one of them, and never withdraws His eyes from us, how grievous and dishonouring to Him must *Independency* be!

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Independency never holds the Head, but sacrifices the unity of the Church of God to keep up a congregation, and gives no place practically to the glorious truth of "one body and one Spirit." When our thoughts, feelings, and affections are governed by Christ the Head, we cannot take any other course than "keep the Spirit's unity," because, in communion with the Head, our affections and interests flow toward all His saints according to His holiness and truth.

May we so abide in Him as to do this for the glory of God. It surely is a blessed thing to have the consciousness that what we are doing is not to please ourselves, but for the glory of God in obedience to His Word. When we know we are standing for our Lord's claims, for His truth, and for His honour, how can we but watch and wait for His coming? How soon we may see His face!

The Spirit, not of Fear, but of Power.

READ 2 TIMOTHY I. 3-8.

SUCH exhortations are never given unless there are circumstances to require it. They are intended to meet some tendency in the flesh, that we may guard against it in the

Spirit. It is well to remember how the Lord deals with us, just as we are; how, in all His ways, He takes into account the circumstances we are in, and does not, like philosophy, take us into other circumstances.

With regard to our cares and trials, Christ does not take us out of them: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world" (John xvii. 15). While He leaves us in the world, He leaves us liable to all that is incident to man; but, in the new nature, teaches us to lean on God. The thought with us often is, that (because we are Christians) we are to get away from trials; or else, if in them, we are not to feel them. This is not God's thought concerning us.

The theoretical Christian may be placid and calm; he has fine books and nice sayings; but, when he has something from God to ruffle his placidity, you will find he is a Christian more conscious of the difficulties there are in the world, and of the difficulty of getting over such.

The nearer a man walks with God (through grace), the more tender he becomes as to the faults of others; the longer he lives as a saint, the more conscious of the faithfulness and tenderness of God, and of what it has been applied to in himself.

See the life of the Lord Jesus. Take Gethsemane, what do we find? Never a cloud

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over His soul, but uniform placidity. You never see Him off His centre. He is always Himself. But take the Psalms, and do we find nothing *within* to break ~~that~~ placidity? The Psalms bring out what was passing within. In the Gospels He is presented to man, as the testimony of the power of God with Him, in those very things that would have vexed man. He walked [in communion] with God about them; and so we find Him in perfect peace, saying with calmness, "Whom seek ye? . . . I am He" (John xviii.). How peaceful! How commanding! For peace in the midst of difficulties does command.

When by Himself, in an agony, He sweats as it were great drops of blood. It was not a placidity because He had not heart-feeling within. He felt the full trial in spirit; but God was always with Him in the circumstances, and therefore He was uniformly calm before men.

We are not to expect never to be exercised, or troubled, or cast down, as though we were without feeling. "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps. lxix. 21). He thoroughly felt it all. The iron entered His soul. "Reproach," He says, "hath broken my heart" (v. 21). But there is this difference between Christ, in suffering and affliction, and ourselves; with Him there was never an in-

stant elapsed between the trial and communion with God. This is not the case with us. We have first to find out that we are weak, and cannot help ourselves; then we turn, and look to God.

Where was Paul when he said, "All men forsook me"? (2 Tim. iv. 16). His confidence in God was not shaken; but, looking around him, by the time he got to the end of his ministry, his heart was broken because of the unfaithfulness. He saw the flood of evil coming in, and the danger of Timothy's being left alone, looking at the evil, and feeling his own weakness; and so (lest Timothy should get into a spirit of fear), he says, "Stir up the gift that is in thee,* . . . for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." If we have got the spirit of fear, this is not of God; for God has given us the spirit of power. He has, in Christ, met the whole power of the enemy in the weakness of men; and Christ is now set

* This passage connects the exercise of gift with the spiritual state. "God has not given us the spirit of fear"; therefore do not be discouraged, though the state of things is so melancholy. Again, in Philippians, they were to be in nothing terrified by their adversaries (i. 28).

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down on the right hand of the majesty on high (Heb. i. 3).

“Be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God.” What! a partaker of afflictions? Yes. Of deliverance from the sense of them? No; a partaker of afflictions that may be felt as a man, but “according to the power of God”!

This is not in not feeling the pressure of sorrow and weakness. Paul had a “thorn in the flesh,” and did he not feel it, think you? Aye, he felt it daily; and as “a messenger of Satan to buffet him” withal. And what did he say? “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities,” in those things in which I am sensibly weak, “that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. xii.).

The power of God coming in on our side does not lessen the feeling to us, but we cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us (1 Peter. v. 7). Not that at the very moment we refer it to God we shall get an answer. Daniel had to wait three full weeks for an answer from God; but from the first day that he set his heart to understand, and to chasten himself before his God, his words were heard (Dan. x.).

With us the first thing often is to think about the thing, and begin to work in our own minds, before we go to God. There was none of this in Christ. “At that time Jesus

answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father ” (Matt. xi.).

“ Be careful for nothing ” (Phil. iv. 6). That is easily said. But what? not be careful about the state of the Church, or about the pressure of a family, etc.? “ Be careful for nothing.” Whatever produces a care in us, produces God’s care for us; therefore “ be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” So, “ the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Not your hearts keep the peace of God; but the peace that God Himself is in, His peace, the unmoved stability of all God’s thoughts, keep your hearts.

Further, when not careful, the mind set free, and the peace of God keeping the heart, God sets the soul thinking on happy things. “ Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you ” (Phil. iv. 9, 10). God is there the companion of the soul; not merely “ the peace of God,” but “ the God of peace.”

TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS. 81

When the soul is cast upon God, the Lord is with the soul in trial, and the mind is kept perfectly calm. The Spirit of love, the Spirit of Christ, is there.

In thinking of myself, this is the spirit of selfishness.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels.

(Concluded).

IN 1 Corinthians ii. we see that the apostle received these things *in* by the Spirit (v. 12); he told them *out* by the Spirit (v. 13), so that we get them as pure as he received them, both being by the Spirit. And then it is also by means of the Spirit that the things are received by those to whom they are addressed (v. 14). “*Comparing* spiritual things with spiritual,” is not the thought: it should be “communicating spiritual things by spiritual means.”

God has shined *into* our hearts, in order to the shining *out* of the knowledge of His glory. This is the meaning of “give the light” in verse 6 of the chapter before us (2 Cor. iv.). It is something like lighting a candle *in* a lantern, that the light of it may shine *out* through the glass; and what Paul could say was, that the light shone out as clear and pure as God had caused it to shine *in*.

The treasure was in an earthen vessel; and the only way for the light of the lamp to be seen was by the pitcher being broken. And Paul did not mind the vessel being knocked about, and hardly pressed, so that the light shone out all the more. In verse 8 of chapter i. he had been "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that" he "despaired even of life."

But what of that? He had the sentence of death already in himself. It was realized already in his mind, and it coming outwardly only gave the consciousness of it greater vividness. He could fully say, as in this chapter, "Death worketh in us." Hence Paul as a mere man had ceased to exist in his service. He was a vessel. For the Corinthians it was only the power of life in Christ which worked in him. Their gain was in all his trouble, as he says, "But life in you."

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 10). This is practically reckoning myself dead continually, in order that the body may be simply a vessel through which the life of Jesus manifests itself.

If the body is anything but a vessel, it is *sin*. When I walk as one dead with Christ, the flesh is not allowed a place. A person may even cultivate the flesh, making a provision for it (Romans xiii. 14 warns against it), but

that is bad indeed. He is a bad gardener that cultivates the weeds.

In verse 11 he says, "Alway delivered unto death" (see also chap. i. 8-10). Here the circumstances Paul was in helped him the more completely to realize himself as dead with Christ. God makes Paul realize these things by the very circumstances he has to pass through, in order that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal body. Thus death wrought in the apostle. What was merely of man, and natural life, disappeared; in order that life in Christ, developing itself in him on the part of God, and by the power of God, should work in the Corinthians by his means.

The flesh must be kept down, and not allowed to move or act; and, when one is in earnest, the Lord passes him through circumstances which help him in it. Paul learns in an honourable way; for, if the circumstances were trying, they came upon him for Christ's sake. With us the Lord has often to send discipline, because we have been *allowing* the flesh.

In verse 15 he says, "All things are for your sakes." What a wonderful thing for Paul to say! How much like his Master here; as also in what he says in 2 Timothy ii. 10: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation

which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"!

Christ in glory is my righteousness. Paul had no better, and no one had any other; and it is He I am following after, to be with Him, and like Him. My life ought to be like a man in a long passage, going towards a bright lamp at the other end of it. I do not get the lamp till the *end*, but I have the light of it all the way; and the nearer I get to it, the more brightly it shines upon me; and, in that sense, I get more of the lamp every step I take.

The nearer I get in my spirit to the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," the more I can afford to regard the trouble on every side as "light affliction," and "but for a moment."

All present things become loss to me, the more really I am looking at eternal things. Positive persecution I find to be less hard to bear when it actually comes, than it seems in looking forward to it. When it is before me I look *at it*; when I am in it, I look *out of it* at Christ, and find relief in God. And thus we do not faint. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not" (2 Cor. iv. 1).

Some Journeys of Peter's Soul.

READ LUKE V. 1-11; JOHN XX. 1-14.

THE soul, as well as the body, has its history. The soul, as well as the body, takes its journeys at times. This we know, and have experienced.

Peter's spirit took a wondrous journey in Luke v. He is there, at first, in the place of nature; an easy, kind-hearted man as ever lived, earnest to love and to serve; and, being such a one, he readily lent his boat to the wondrous Stranger who was there addressing the multitude on the shore of the Sea of Genesaret. And when the wants of this Stranger were over, at His bidding Peter put his boat further into the lake, and let down his net for a draught.

But this was nature still. He had not left the place of nature yet; his own place, the place where his natural friendliness and easiness of temper had put him all his life hitherto. "Master," said he to Jesus, "we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net."

But now the journey of his soul begins, a wondrous distant journey, but performed as in a whirlwind. "The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof," in their way, were standing and waiting for him. The draught of fishes which came at the word of the Stranger sur-

prised the soul of Peter, and at once bore him into the presence of God. The Stranger was transfigured before his soul as in the twinkling of an eye. He was the Lord of the fulness of the sea, who could command the draught, and Peter stood in the presence of God.

The living God, the God of glory, was in the place, and Peter had not known it till now, and the sight overwhelms him. He learns himself there, and he is confounded. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

It is no more "Master," but "Lord." It is no more the *fisherman* Peter, who had been toiling all the night at his nets, but the *sinner* Peter. It is a new world to him, the brightness of which is too powerful.

He is in God's presence, and it is too much for him. He learns himself where only we can duly learn ourselves, in the presence of the glory of God. We have all sinned, and come short of that glory, and that is discovered by our souls when that glory is reached for the first time (Rom. iii. 23).

This was a journey indeed. Peter was taken from the native land of his easy, kindly, but revolted nature (revolted, because it could not stand before God), to the dwelling-place of the glory of God; and he apprehends that place in the brightness of it, and is amazed.

But he must go still further into this new world. He must still travel; and the word, the

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further word of the Lord, the word of Him whose divine honour and rights had here been discovered to him, must lead him on. "Fear not," says Jesus to him; and when he obeys, and follows where those words lead him, his journey is ended. He may dwell for ever in the place he has now reached. He has left the native land of nature for the presence of God, and found it the home of a poor, convicted, conscience-stricken sinner.

Many a journey, I am sure, the soul of Peter took in after days. He had to pass through the rebukes of the Lord; and they ever give the soul a chapter in its history, or take it some stage of that living way which the word of God has cast up before us, and along which the Spirit of God bears us. But I am thinking only of one other journey which this loved and earnest man had to perform under the hand of the Lord. I mean that which he takes in John xxi. 1-14.

Here we find him again at his fishing. Sweet, natural scene! It is given to us in all artlessness of truth. He and some companions are again on the Sea of Galilee, and again a Stranger addresses him. In like simplicity and friendship which gave him character at the first, he does as this Stranger bids him; and he is, in like grace, rewarded by another heavy draught of fishes.

This was a token. It was symptomatic of

who this Stranger was. The finger may not be sensitive enough to feel the pulse, or the eye keen enough to discover the mark. Peter fails in this faculty, and John sees for him. "It is the Lord," says he to him. The eye had seen for the body, and then the foot begins its service.

Peter's second journey begins, as we tracked him first in Luke v., with the speed of a single, devoted, and loving heart. He is in the water at once to reach the Lord. He *now* knew Him as he had not when he began his first journey. He had already said to him, "Fear not." He now knew Him, and is not amazed. His presence is not that of a glory that was overwhelming, but of a glory that had already given his conscience a home; and though that conscience had every reason at that moment to be a coward, it is bold as a lion. The fisherman Peter, when introduced at first to the presence of God, had become, in his experience, the sinner Peter; but now the fisherman Peter becomes, in his experience, the loved, saved, accepted Peter.

He will tread softly; surely he will; for he worships in the presence of God; but he treads confidently, for he is accepted in that presence, and courts it with all speed and all certainty. Right it was at first that in that presence he should be convicted, and discover his sin. Right it is now that in that presence he should

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be a worshipper, a consciously accepted worshipper, for that glory had already spoken comfortably to him.

What two draughts of fishes these were ! What two journeys for the soul to take ! How Peter's spirit was called to penetrate the new world where the glory and the grace of Christ so shine !

And in the display of the grace that is there, I discover the same character after as before the resurrection. A blessed discovery for the soul ! In other days, as in Mark iv., the Lord had to rebuke the disciples for their little faith, fearing (as they had done) when the storm rose on the lake. But ere He rebuked their unbelief He allayed their tremblings. He said, "Peace, be still," to the waves, ere He said to the disciples, "How is it that ye have no faith ?"

And so now with Peter. He sits with Peter, He dines with Peter. The full, free fellowship of his heart with his loved One is made sure to Peter's spirit ere his Lord addresses Himself to his conscience, and brings his ways to remembrance.

The Jesus who had once calmed the sea, ere He rebuked the disciples, now gives Peter an unbroken net full of fishes, and dines with him, ere He says to him, "Lovest thou Me ?"

Oh, the secrets of that land which Peter had entered !

God's House and the Way.

READ PSALM LXXXIV.

WE get ourselves so accustomed to certain things by their constant use that the power of their meaning becomes destroyed.

It may be a bad word or a good word; but words that would deeply affect others thus fail to move us.

This we find but too true as regards the scripture truth itself. What an effect such an announcement as that in John iii. 16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," etc., would have upon us, if listened to for the first time, and the value of its meaning entered into!

Just the same it is with this scripture before us: "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts!" etc.

Would not such a thought as being in God's court, as men dwelling in God's own house, greatly delight and surprise us, if heard for the first time, and its meaning understood? What an effect such a truth as this would have upon us if fully believed: God going to make us dwell with Himself in His own house!

He does dwell with us now, as we know; but we are not yet dwelling in His house. God never dwelt with Adam, nor did Adam dwell with God. He made a suitable dwelling-place for man, and put Adam in it. He did come

down to visit him, but He did not dwell with him. Indeed, the first time we read of God coming down, His word is, "Where art thou?"

The paradise on earth was not God's dwelling-place. We read in the Revelation that the tabernacle of God is with men, and the Lamb is the light and the temple of it.

"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah." The heart that has found God longs for a dwelling-place with Him.

It was this desire that moved the disciples on the mount of transfiguration to make a request for three tabernacles. It was Jewish, of course; but they could not bear the thought of the Lord Jesus going away. They wished Him to stay with them; they wanted to keep Him down here.

He could not remain, but left them and us words of comfort. "Let not your heart be troubled. . . In My Father's house are many mansions," many chambers. "I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv.)

This new thing is brought out here most blessedly: that man shall dwell with God in His own house. The Lord Jesus could not stay with His beloved disciples down here,

because it is polluted; but He will have His people with Himself, where there is holiness, and everything suited to meet the need and claims of holiness. His people shall dwell with Him. "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am" (John xvii.).

The first thought in the heart of Moses (Exod. xv.), whilst recounting God's acts of power and delivering grace, is the desire to make Him a house: "He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation."

But verse 13 gives us a fuller thought of faith: "Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation": the redemption song of the Lord's strength and power.

In verse 17 we get the clear promise of this new thing; a dwelling-place with God, which He Himself has made. That is what He will do for them: not merely a rest in the wilderness, but the blessed purpose of God is to bring His people into His sanctuary which He has made.

What! man to dwell with God? Wondrous fact! The thoughts of this new thing fills my soul with the deepest joy.

The heart that longs for God finds rest in the altar of God. "Thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts," etc. "My heart . . . crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found

a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young."

How beautifully this parenthesis shows us the tender care that God has over all His creatures! He fails not to find a house for the most worthless of birds, and a nest for the most restless. What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul gets that casts itself upon the watchful, tender care of Him who provides so fully for the need of all His creatures!

We know what the word "nest" conveys, just as well as the expression "a house." Is it not a place of security, a shelter from storm, a covert to hide one's self in from every evil, a protection from all that can harm, a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in?

The term is just as familiar in the Scriptures as that of "the house." The prodigal well understood the comfort and plenty of the Father's house before he turned his face towards it; but it was the Father that knew the claims of the house, and He must clothe him suitably for it before he is admitted into it (Luke xv.).

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee." It is this new thing, that men should dwell in God's own house; not be there merely as a visitor, but a dweller. The visitor does not know all that belongs to the house; but nothing can be

kept back from a dweller; he is at home, and must know all the privileges and blessings of the house.

Surely there will be perfect blessedness in that house, where Christ has prepared everything; where God is at home; and has arranged all according to His own wisdom and power and glory; the Lamb being the light and the temple.

Now, those who dwell there must have the moral qualities of the house; their tastes, and enjoyments, and nature, must be suited to the house.

In time past God did come into the temple after a Jewish order; but the people were shut out from even this glory; the very opposite to dwelling with God. They were a favoured people, it is true; separated from the nations by God's grace; but they knew not the constant, increasing blessing of the house.

There is another thing; the way to this house; the road to that place where God and His people shall dwell. He has been dwelling with them, but He will have them to dwell with Him, and His heart has ordered the way.

When we were sinners, merely sinners, and could do nothing but sin, He put it all away. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). He has given us a new nature, which has the moral capabilities of

enjoying a dwelling-place with Him in His own house.

God has dwelt with man; the God-man, Christ Jesus, has tabernacled down here; and His glory was displayed in "grace and truth" (John i. 14).

In Exodus xxix. we learn a further truth of the tabernacle and the altar; but the grand thought all through is not only God dwelling with His people, but He must have them to dwell with Him.

In Ezekiel we see the glory that had rested on the temple departing gradually, reluctantly, yet really. But this had not been the fulness of His indwelling in the Christian; neither was it His presence in the Church: "Ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22).

How this new thing occupies God, the thought of His own house! His word declares it; prophets tell of it; grace puts us in possession of it; faith gives us the enjoyment of it; the Lord Jesus is the way to it.

The First Epistle of John brings out this truth very fully (see chapters iii., iv.).

(To be concluded, D.V.)

The light of the lamp is brightest in the darkest night. So should our faith be when all is gloomy around.

The Throne and the Altar.

READ ISAIAH VI. 1-8.

IN this very sublime passage of scripture, we notice two prominent objects, namely, the throne, and the altar; and, moreover, we perceive the action of these two objects upon the soul of the prophet. The entire scene is full of interest and instruction. May we gaze upon it aright.

“ In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon *a throne, high and lifted up*, and His train filled the temple.”

This was a solemn and soul-subduing sight. It is ever a serious matter for a sinner to find himself standing before the throne of God, with the unanswered claims of that throne bearing down upon his conscience. Isaiah found it to be so. The light of the throne revealed to him his true condition.

And what was that light? It was the moral glory of Christ, as we read in the Gospel of John, “ These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him ” (chap. xii. 41). Christ is the perfect standard by which every one must be measured. It matters not what I may think of myself, nor yet what others may think about me : the question is, What am I as viewed in the presence of Christ?

The law may tell me what I ought to be; conscience may tell me I am not that; but it is only when the bright beams of Christ's glory

pour themselves around me, that I am enabled to form a just estimate of what I am. Then it is that the hidden chambers of my heart are flung open, the secret springs of action are revealed, the deep foundations of character laid bare.

But perhaps my reader may feel disposed to ask, "What do you mean by the moral glory of Christ?"

I mean the light which shone forth from Him in all His ways when He was down here in this dark world. It was this light that detected man, that disclosed what he was, that brought to light *all* that was in him. It was impossible for any one to escape the action of that light. It was a perfect blaze of divine purity, in view of which the seraphim could only cry out, "Holy, holy, holy."

Need we marvel, then, if, when Isaiah saw himself in the light of that glory, he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone"?

Nay; this was the proper utterance of one whose heart had been penetrated to its very centre by a light which makes all things perfectly manifest.

We have no reason to suppose that Isaiah was in any respect worse than his neighbours. We are not told that the catalogue of his sins was heavier or darker than that of thousands around him. He may have been, to all human appearance, just like others.

But ah ! my reader, only remember, I pray you, where the prophet stood when he exclaimed, "Woe is me !" It was not at the foot of the burning mount, when "the ministration of death and condemnation" was given forth amid thunderings and lightnings, blackness, darkness, and tempest. It was not there he stood; though even there a Moses had to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake"; but it was in the presence of the glory of Christ, the Lord God of Israel, that our prophet stood when he saw himself to be "unclean" and "undone." Such was his condition when seen in the light which reveals men and things just as they are.

"I am undone."

He does not say, "Woe is me! I am not what I ought to be." No; he saw deeper than this. He stood revealed in the power of a light which reaches to the most profound depths of the soul, and discloses "the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Isaiah had never before seen himself in such a light, measured himself by such a rule, weighed himself in such a balance. He now saw himself standing in the presence of Jehovah's throne, without any ability whatever to meet the claims of that throne. He "saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." He saw himself a helpless, ruined, guilty sinner, at an immeasurable distance from that

throne, and from the Blessed One who sat thereon.

He heard the cry of the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy"; and the only response which he could send back from the depths of a broken heart was, "Unclean, unclean, unclean."

He beheld a gulf of guilt and uncleanness separating him from Jehovah which no effort of his could ever bridge. Thus it was with him, in that solemn moment, when he gave forth that cry of a truly convicted soul, "Woe is me!"

He was wholly engrossed with one thought, namely, his own utter ruin. He felt himself *a lost man*. He thought not of comparing himself with others, nor of seeking out some fellow-sinner worse than he. Ah, no! a divinely convicted soul never thinks of such things. There is one grand, all-pervading idea, and that is embodied in the words, "I am undone."

And be it carefully noted by the reader, that the prophet, when under the convicting light of the "throne," is not occupied with what he had done, or left undone. The question before his soul was not as to the evil he had done, or the good he had left undone. No; it was something far deeper than this. In a word, he was occupied not with his *acts* but with his *condition*. He says, "*I am*"—what? Defective in many things? Far behind in my

duty? Deplorably short of what I ought to be?

No. These and such-like confessions could never embody the experience of a heart on which the bright beams of Jehovah's throne had fallen in convicting power. True it is "we have done that which we ought not to have done, and left undone that which we ought to have done." But all this is merely the fruit of a nature which is radically corrupt; and when divine light breaks in upon us, it will always lead us to the *root*. It will not merely conduct us from leaf to leaf, or from branch to branch; but, passing down along the trunk, it will lay bare the hidden roots and thinnest fibres of that nature which we inherit by birth from our first parents, and cause us to see that the whole thing is irremediably ruined. Then it is we are constrained to cry out, "Woe is me!" Not because my *conduct* has been defective, but my nature is undone.

Thus it was that Isaiah stood before Jehovah's throne. And, oh! what a place for a sinner to stand in! There are no excuses there; no palliating circumstances there; no qualifying clauses there; no blaming of men or things there. There is but one object seen there, seen in its guilt, its wretchedness, and its ruin: and that object is *SELF*.

And as to that object the tale is easily told. It is all summed up in that most solemn, weighty, suggestive word, "UNDONE." Yes;

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self is undone. That is all that can be said about it. Do what you will with it, and you cannot make it out to be aught but a hopeless, undone thing; and the more speedily and thoroughly this is understood, the better.

Many take a long time to learn this foundation truth. They have not, as it were, stood in the full blaze of the throne, and, as a consequence, they have not been led to cry out with sufficient depth, emphasis, or intensity, "I am undone!"

It is the glory that shines from the "throne" which evokes the cry from the very depths of the soul. All who have ever stood before that throne have given utterance to the same confession; and it will ever be found that just in proportion to our experience of the *light* of the *throne*, will be our experience of the *grace* of the *altar*. The two things invariably go together.

In this day of *grace*, the "throne" and the "altar" are connected. In the day of *judgment* "the great white throne" will be seen without any altar (Rev. xx.). There will be no grace then. The *ruin* will then be seen without the *remedy*; and as for the *result*, it will be eternal perdition.

Awful reality! Oh, reader, beware of having to meet the light of the throne without the provision of the altar!

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Sonship, and the leading of the Spirit of God.

IT is only by the surpassing riches of the grace of God that any of us are His children; and because it is wholly of grace, it must be therefore on the principle of faith, and not of works. Hence we read, "Ye are all the children [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26).

It is, however, very blessed to *know it* on the authority of the word of God as a divine certainty; but more blessed still to have the *enjoyment* of this new and everlasting relationship by the truth brought home to our hearts in the power of the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Another inspired apostle says, "Beloved, *now* are we the sons [children] of God" (Rom. viii. 16; 1 John iii. 2).

It is scarcely possible that anything can be more simply or more definitely stated. There is no "if" or "but" in the sentence; no "hoping to be" or room for the shadow of a "doubt." The fact is unmistakably set forth, that all who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are "children of God."

Let us never forget that this is what the Spirit of God teaches, and it is therefore God's

SONSHIP, AND THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT. 103

truth, and not man's opinion. Till we receive what God says about the death and bloodshedding of His own Son, and because He says it, we are not believers, not children of God. But having been born of the Spirit, and having received the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit is given to indwell us as God's seal, His anointing, the earnest of the inheritance, to lead us also and teach us, so that we might *know* and *enjoy*, on the authority of Scripture, our new and everlasting relationship of children (Eph. i. 13; 1 John ii. 20; Rom. viii. 16).

He witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God; and it is a never-ending source of holy enjoyment, thanksgiving, and praise. In this way the soul begins to know God as Father. "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). Nor is this all; for we are further instructed, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17).

Let us not, dear reader, lightly pass this by, but consider how far *we know* and *enjoy* this blessed relationship to God into which we have been brought. Let us remember that we have "joy and peace in believing"; not in knowing the doctrine merely, but in receiving the truth of it into our hearts as from the

mouth of God. Thus eating the words of God for ourselves, making them our own, we live day by day in the comfort of this unchangeable and everlasting relationship.

Sure it is that, however pious we may appear, we cannot walk as children of God unless we know we are His children. Many will say, "Yes, I see it," or, "I have known it for some years," but to live day by day in the enjoyment of it as a settled reality, and look on to the blessed prospect laid out before us, produces gladness of heart and holy liberty as nothing else can. Let us then not fail to *receive from God* by His word, and *enjoy before Him*, the astounding truth that His own unfathomable grace has made us His children, to care for and comfort for ever to His own everlasting praise and glory.

Observe, too, that the Spirit given to us to make us know that we are God's children is spoken of as "the Spirit of His Son," that we may have in our measure His own feelings and affections; and that He is also spoken of as "the Spirit of adoption" (Rom. viii. 15), to make us realise our position, and give us thoughts, feelings, and affections suited to "Abba, Father." Our Lord prayed that the love wherewith the Father loved Him may be *in* us, and also referred to a time when the world will know that the Father has loved us as He loved Him. Precious grace!

SONSHIP, AND THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT. 105

The Holy Spirit is also our Leader. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And be it remembered that He is here also to guide us into *all* the truth. He is never spoken of as *driving* us, but in all the tenderness of a loving nurse *leading* the little children. This is in full keeping with divine love; and being led by Him is a mark of sonship.

As to this leading of the Spirit of God, it is easy to say, "I am led of the Spirit to do this or that"; but it is certain that He never leads us to have confidence in the flesh, or to covet a position in the world which has crucified the Lord of glory, or to do anything contrary to His word. Doubtless His usual way of leading is by the written word, though as to time, place, circumstances, and other details, if we walk in the truth, watch His eye and hand, having no will of our own in activity, but with all humility having an eye to His glory, He will assuredly guide.

The Spirit is the Glorifier and Testifier of the Son of God, and takes of the things of the Father, and of the Son, and shows them to us; and these are important landmarks never to be lost sight of. To separate, therefore, the operations of the Spirit of God from the testimony of the written Word, and from the Person of the Son, would be unsound and misleading.

The Holy Spirit brings us into conscious association with Christ. Even if He occupies us with ourselves to reprove us for sin, it is to bring us with self-judgment into the presence of God. As we are called into the fellowship of the Son of God, to have parted company with Him is to have descended to the thoughts of the flesh.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Rivers of Living Water.

READ JOHN VII.

WE find in this Gospel, not only the testimony to the Jewish people of the Messiah, and the message of the kingdom, but the glorious doctrine of the person of Christ, the rejection of which rendered it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha than for them.

In the previous Gospels the Lord is set before us as Son of Abraham, Son of David, Son of man, the Messiah, the servant, the perfect Israelite.

This Christ-rejecting generation not only broke the law but discarded the promises as well. Abraham's seed but rebels against Abraham's God. Those who had the promises must now come in on a common level with the

Gentile, through grace. God is faithful to His word, that is true; but it is only under mercy they can be saved.

There is no historical account of Christ in this Gospel, no genealogy; but we are taken back to the beginning of the Book of Genesis; and get a truth deeper, higher, and far beyond that of the other Gospels, even the glory of Christ as it ever was, before He became the Incarnate Word.

And this is so blessed for us, for we get eternal life in Him, in Him who has life in Himself. It is not the promises we get (though we get them too), but it is the Promiser Himself. It is this blessed One who is our life; life that existed before worlds began. He had a former glory, but this glory of His person, where is that to be found? In His redeemed: there it will be displayed.

Christ came to His own, but they received Him not; and since then they have been treated as reprobates all along.

Up to Christ's rejection God tried man. He left him without law; put him under law; gave him priesthood and prophets; and in due time sent His only begotten Son.

All was without avail. Did they reverence Him? No. "This is the heir," said they; "come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours"; thus bringing to light that most dreadful truth, "The carnal mind is

enmity against God" (Mark xii. 1; Rom. viii. 7).

Man would not have the holiness of God, neither would he have the love of God. And now God brings in a new thing, a spring of life, and puts away sin through the cross of His Son; and Christ, having died for sin, takes His seat at the right hand of God, victorious over all, and sends down the promised Spirit to enable us to walk before Him.

In chapter vi. we get Christ feeding the multitude who followed Him (and the disciples too).

There are three great feasts spoken of that the Jews always kept: the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

In this last feast the vintage was prefigured, the showing by a figure they had been a people who had dwelt in booths, but now had rest.

Christ could feed them in the wilderness, but He could not go with them to this feast; for before Christ could enter on a rest down here, the work of redemption must be accomplished, and the church must be taken. Therefore He said, "I go not up yet unto this feast, for My time is not fully come." His brethren may go, but He could not now declare His glory, and enter upon His rest. But there was an eighth day, when comes rest; then He would keep the Feast of Tabernacles, then should

God's holy rest be on the earth, God's church being in the glory.

The Spirit is spoken of in three ways: first, all saved ones from the beginning to the end are born of the Spirit; secondly, the Spirit in them a well of water springing up; thirdly, rivers flowing out (John iii., iv., vii.). "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). The Holy Ghost was not yet given, we read, "because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Mark, before the disciples could receive the Holy Ghost, the work of atonement must be done, and Jesus be a glorified Man, seated up there at God's right hand.

Who? A Man. Why? Sin is put away.

Yes; Jesus as Son of man, is glorified; as Son of God He was ever the glorified One. God was so glorified by the work of His Son that, so to speak, He became His debtor.

How did the Son of man glorify God? By suffering for my sins on the cross. God's judgment was perfectly met, and God perfectly glorified the Man Christ Jesus who endured the wrath. The exaltation of this glorified Man is the witness that my sins are fully put away. What does God say about my sins now? "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. viii. 12).

Where was the truth of God displayed that said, "In the day that thou eatest thou shalt

surely die," and Satan's lie fully proved which said, "Ye shall not surely die"? (Gen. ii. 17, iii. 4).

On the cross, where Christ died. "God is love." The majesty, the holiness, the love of God were magnified on the cross. The question of sin is settled. The Son of man is glorified. God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit have all been occupied about my sin. What a footing I have! Done with sins, no more conscience of them; Christ has taken them clean off. He could not bring us into God's presence with ONE sin upon us. No; though they were "as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. i. 18).

Christ became obedient unto death; and this settles the whole thing, and gives power to the poor sinner. With what holy freedom I can go into God's presence, when I know Christ is there, seated at God's right hand, as my Fore-runner! I have a perfect righteousness, a perfect love, and a perfect obedience to appear in. What comfort and what joy! You could not go into God's presence with one sin upon you; it would be folly to think of it, madness to attempt it. One sin unpardoned would unfit you for enjoying God. You must be perfectly clean. The blood of Christ does cleanse from all sin, so that the soul in the presence of God can enjoy God; "we also joy in God" (Rom. v. 11).

The glorified Jesus, seated in heaven, sends down the Comforter to give us power for fellowship with Him. . . . We have the earnest; we wait for the inheritance. We have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. And when we view the holiness, the power, the love of God, how delightful is the thought that He is my Father! The love wherewith He has loved His own Son He has bestowed upon me. No man has seen God at any time; but we learn what the Father is by the Son. We see in Him the outflowings of the divine fulness; and we must drink at this Rock. It is not enough for us to see; we must draw from Him; and there will be the conscious outflowing of what He is. What a character that truth should give us! One with Christ in heaven, "Head of His body, the church"; a living union with Him: God for us, Christ in us, the Spirit's seal on us.

"If any man thirst." We must remember we do not drink for others, and others cannot drink for us. I must FEEL my own want, and I must bring my own want to Christ myself. There must be a thirsting, before there can be a drinking. Have I a want in my heart that Christ cannot meet? No. Is there a spiritual want in the soul that goes to Christ without finding relief? No. "If any man thirst." Now there must be a need, and that need must be felt, known, and brought to Christ. Then,

no matter what it be, He says, "Come unto Me and drink."

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Think, beloved friends, of Christ sitting at a well. Which of us would not gladly go to Him with open hearts, and let Him read out of them all their need? He is not to be put off. He knew her need, and left her not until she felt it, and He met it.

If we are to be useful to poor sinners, we must be more like Christ. Why we help them so little is, that we do not come down low enough to them in grace. Think of the place Christ ever took towards them, and follow Him, being partakers of the grace, and remembering the word, "If any man thirst."

In the last chapter of Revelation we have another word. Now, having this water of life in us, we are in a position to say, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." We have not the Bridegroom, we wait for Him; but we have the Spirit, the living water. We can count on the grace and love of God, knowing it will not fail for any who cast themselves on the blood of Jesus.

Signs of the Last Days.

I HAVE just been thinking how the great apostate systems, whether civil or ecclesiastical, are to advance in strength and magnificence just as the day of their doom and judgment approaches. Witness the woman in Rev. xviii. and the beast in Rev. xiii.

And I ask, Is not this moment through which we are passing giving pledges of this? Do we not see the great ecclesiastical system advancing to occupy itself of the world with something of giant strength? And is not the world, as a civil or secular thing, spreading itself out in luxuries and attainments and cultivation and magnificence, beyond all precedent? And are not these things the pledges that all is on the road to the display of the woman and the beast in their greatness and grandeur, which are divinely destined to precede their judgment?

But again I ask, Is there any such notice under the hand of the Spirit, that the *saints* are to rise to their great or beautiful condition before their translation? The *apostate* things are to be great before their judgment comes, but (I ask) is the *true* thing to be great in its way before its glory comes?

This is an affecting enquiry. What answer does the oracle of God give it?

The SECOND TIMOTHY contemplates the *ruin*

or *break-up* of the Church. But what condition does it anticipate things to be in afterwards? No restoration to spiritual strength or beauty in church order, but *the pure in heart* calling on the Lord together . . . and following the virtues, and cultivating the graces, that belong to them and become them, in company.

JUDE anticipates the last days. But what then? He promises nothing in the way of restored order and power, but encourages the "beloved" to build themselves up in holy faith, and to be looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life.

The SECOND PETER also contemplates the last days, and fearful, *unclean* abominations among professors, and the *scorning of promises* in the world. But he gives no hint of restored order and strength in the Church, but tells the saints to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, in the assurance that the promise of His coming and majesty is not a cunningly devised fable.

JOHN contemplates the last days also; but it is under one strongly defined characteristic: the tampering with, and the denial of, the inestimably precious mystery of the Godhead-Persons, and the truth about the Son. But he expects us only *individually* so to hold by that mystery that we may not be ashamed before Him touching it, when He Himself appears.

SIGNS OF THE LAST DAYS.

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The judgment of the Seven Churches takes place in Rev. ii., iii.

It is a solemn scene. There is some good, and much evil. There are many healthful admonitions for us, both in our individual and gathered condition; but there is no promise of restored order and power. The churches are judged, left under the word of judgment, and we hear no more of them *on earth*. The next sight we get of the elect is *in heaven*, in chapter iv.

All this, beloved, is serious and yet happy; for all is strikingly verified by the great moral phenomena around us at this moment. . .

It is well. It is gracious in the Lord to cast up before our eye, in His word, the high road along which we were destined to travel, and the sights we were appointed to see. And it is happy to know that our translation does not wait for our regained condition of corporate order and strength. We might wait *long* if that were so, according to present appearances.

The *wrong* things will be in their *magnificence*, just when their *judgment* comes. The *true* thing will be in *weakness* till its *glory* comes.

The measure of my privilege is, that I am in Christ. The measure of my responsibility is, that Christ is in me.

The Throne and the Altar.

(Concluded).

THIS conducts us, naturally, to the second object in the interesting scene before us, namely, *the altar*.

The very moment Isaiah gave utterance to the deep conviction of what he was, he was introduced to the divine provisions of God's altar. "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Here, then, we have the rich provisions of Jehovah's altar, which, be it well remembered, is seen in immediate connection with Jehovah's throne. The two things are intimately connected in the history and experience of every convicted and converted soul.

The guilt which the throne detects, the altar removes. If in the light of the throne, one object is seen, namely, ruined, guilty, undone self; then, in the light of the altar, one object is seen, namely, a full, precious, all-sufficient Christ. The remedy reaches to the full extent of the ruin, and the same light that reveals the one reveals the other, likewise.

This gives settled repose to the conscience. God Himself has provided a remedy for all the ruin which the light of His throne has revealed.

“This *hath touched* thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”

Isaiah was brought into personal contact with the sacrifice, and the immediate result was the perfect removal of *all* his iniquity, the perfect purgation of *all* his sin. Not a single spot remained.

He could now stand in the light of that throne which had just detected and exposed his uncleanness, and know assuredly, by that self-same light, that not a speck of uncleanness remained. The very same light which manifested his sin, made manifest also the purging efficacy of the blood.

Such, then, is the precious and beautiful connection between the throne and the altar, a connection which may be easily traced through the inspired volume, from Genesis to Revelation, and through the history of God's redeemed, from Adam down to the present moment.

All who have been really brought to Jesus, have experienced the convicting light of the throne and the peace-giving virtues of the altar. All have been made to feel their ruin, and cry out, “I am undone!” and all have been brought into personal contact with the sacrifice, and had their sin purged.

God's work is perfect. He convicts perfectly, and He purges perfectly. There is nothing superficial when He carries on His

mighty work. The arrow of conviction penetrates to the very centre of the soul, only to be followed by the divine application of that blood which leaves not a stain upon the conscience; and the more deeply we are penetrated by the arrow, the deeper and more settled is our experience of the power of the blood.

It is well to be thoroughly searched at the first; well to let the chambers of the heart be fully thrown open to the convicting action of the throne; for then we are sure to get a bolder grasp of that precious, atoning blood that speaks peace to every believing heart. And, my reader, let me ask you to pause here for a moment, and mark the peculiar *style* of the divine action in the case of the prophet.

We all know how much depends upon the *way* in which a thing is done. A person may do me a favour; but he may do it in such a style as to do away with all the good of it.

Now, in the scene before us, we not only see a marvellous favour conferred, but conferred after such a fashion as to let us into the very secrets of the bosom of God. The divine remedy was not only applied to Isaiah's felt ruin, but applied in such a way as to let him know, assuredly, that the whole heart of God was in the application. "Then *flew* one of the seraphims unto me."

The rapidity of the movement speaks volumes. It tells us distinctly of heaven's in-

tense desire to tranquillize the convicted conscience, bind up the broken heart, and heal the wounded spirit. The energy of divine love gave swiftness to the seraphic messenger, as he winged his way down from Jehovah's throne to where a convicted sinner stood confessing himself "undone."

What a scene! One of those very seraphim, that with veiled face stood before Jehovah's throne crying, "Holy, holy, holy," passes from that throne to the altar, and from the altar away down to the deep depths of a convicted sinner's ruin, there to apply the balmy virtues of a divine sacrifice.

No sooner had the arrow from the throne wounded the heart, than the seraph from the altar "flew" to heal the wound. No sooner had the throne poured forth its flood of living light to reveal to the prophet the blackness of his guilt, than a tide of love rolled down upon him from the altar, and bore away upon its bosom every trace of that guilt. Such is the style, such the manner, of the love of God to sinners.

Who would not trust Him?

Beloved reader, whosoever you are, I feel there is a sacred link connecting us; and in the power of that link, and in earnest desire for the welfare of your immortal soul, permit me to ask you if you have experienced the action of the "throne" and the "altar"? Have you

ever retired from all that false light which the enemy of your precious soul would fling around you, in order to prevent your getting a true insight into your total ruin? Have you ever stood where Isaiah found himself when he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone"? Have you ever been brought to own from your heart, "I have sinned"? (Job xxxiii.).

If so, it is your privilege this moment to enter into the rich enjoyment of all that Christ has done for you on the cross. You do not need to see any vision. You do not require to see a throne, an altar, a flying seraph. You have got the word of God to assure you that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). That same word also assures you that "All that believe *are* justified from *all* things" (Acts xiii. 39).

And is not this far better than ten thousand visions, or than ten thousand seraphim? Isaiah believed that his "iniquity was taken away, and his sin purged" when the angelic messenger told him so. And should you not believe that Jesus died for you, when the word of God tells you so?

But, perhaps you say, "How can I know that Jesus died for *me*?"

I reply, How can anyone know it? Simply by the word of God. There is no other way of knowing anything.

But you still object, "I do not see my name in the word of God."

No; and even though your name were mentioned, this would in no wise satisfy you, inasmuch as there might be hundreds bearing your name. But you see your state, your character, your condition. You see your photograph flung, with divine precision, upon the page of inspiration, by the action of that light which makes all things manifest.

Do you own yourself to be a lost sinner? If so, the death of Christ applies itself as perfectly to you as the "live coal" did to Isaiah when the seraph declared to him, "This hath touched thy lips."

The word is, "If any say, I have sinned."

What then? He will send him to hell? No; but "He will deliver his soul" (Job xxxiii. 27, 28).

The very moment you take your true place, and cry out, "Undone!" all that Christ has done, and all that He is, becomes yours, yours now, yours for ever. You need not make any effort to improve your condition. Do what you will, you cannot make yourself anything but undone. A single effort at improvement is but the evidence that you know not yet how bad, how incorrigibly and incurably bad you are. You are "undone," and, as such, you have but to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," a salvation, the foundation of

which was laid over eighteen hundred years ago; a salvation which the Holy Ghost reveals on the authority of that word which is settled for ever in heaven, and which God has magnified above all His name.

May the blessed Spirit lead you *now* to put your trust in the name of Jesus, that so, ere you lay down this paper, you may know that your "iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged." Then you will be able to follow me, while, in a few closing words, I seek to unfold the practical result of all that has been engaging our attention.

We have seen the complete *ruin* of the sinner; we have seen the complete *remedy* in Christ; let us now look at the *result*, as exhibited in whole-hearted consecration to the service of God.

Isaiah had nothing to do for salvation, but he had plenty to do for his Saviour. He had nothing to do to get his sins purged, but plenty to do for the One who had purged them. Now, he gave unmistakable expression to his readiness to act for God, when, on hearing that a messenger was needed, he exclaimed, "Here am I; send me."

This puts works in their proper place. The order is absolutely perfect. No one can do good works until he has experienced, in some degree, the action of the "throne" and the "altar." The light of the former must show

him what he is, and the provisions of the latter must show him what Christ is, ere he can say, "Here am I; send me."

This is a settled, universal truth, established in every section of inspiration, and illustrated in the biography of the saints of God and of the servants of Christ, in every age, in every clime, in every condition.

All have been brought to see their *ruin* in the light of the throne, to see the *remedy* in the provisions of the altar, ere they could exhibit the *result* in a life of practical devotedness. All this is from God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Holy Ghost: to whom be all the glory, world without end! Amen and Amen!

Nothing teaches like the word of God, sought out and searched in holy subjection, and received as a new-born babe. We have thus understanding, divine wisdom, as to our mind and path; so it gives more wisdom than human experience, when God's precepts are kept.

What has been taught of man, may be left for man; but what has been taught of God will never be left for God; and for whom else shall we leave it? It comes from and leads to Him.

God's House and the Way.

(Concluded).

NOW, how is it that we feel ourselves wonderfully more united to a Christian whom we may have known for only half-an-hour, than to a mere acquaintance we may have known all our lives? Is it not the reality of the truth that God is there? God dwells in us, and we in Him. It is something more than a new nature, for it goes on to say, "We know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John iii. 24).

In the next chapter we get that wonderful word, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love," etc. Oh, the joy this knowledge gives the heart! What comfort the soul gets in such proximity to God! How the thought of this house delights one, this house that God is bringing us to, where we shall learn Him most fully, and love Him without hindrance!

How complete, how perfect, is God's work! He gave Jesus to die for us, and He has sent down the Holy Ghost to teach us, to assure our hearts that the Lord Jesus Christ has done everything for us. He has fitted us for this house, and we have in Him all we need. He gives us the moral qualities of the dwellers of the house, the new nature that can enjoy the

glory of the house. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house : they will be still praising Thee." Nothing but praise becomes those who shall dwell in God's house ; it will be their unwearied, untiring employ ; continual praise. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose heart are the ways." If by faith I am dwelling in God's house, I have perfect rest. If I am counting on His strength, let my difficulty be what it may, I have entire repose. Communion with God always gives confidence in His power.

This is the key to the psalm before us. If my heart has learnt the love God has for me, and what His purposes are towards me, I can trust Him to order the way. God's love was displayed in His Son, revealed in the gift of Him ; and the Son will give grace and strength for the way. "Of those whom Thou hast given Me have I lost none." God has fully provided for our need. He has quickened us, cleansed us, sealed us.

If Paul had to say, I am not already perfect, he knew it was the way up, the way to the house, the way home. If my heart is set upon this glorious dwelling-place, I shall not be so much occupied about the ease or comfort of the way, as I shall be to know that it is the way. The glory of the inheritance will be far more to me than the character of the things that are round the pathway to it.

Everything may be against me; all may seem united to hinder my progress. Should I be trying to make myself comfortable, desiring to settle down in a place and a world which is striving to keep me from my house and my home, depriving me of enjoyment and blessing?

No; the one thing that should occupy me is the way out. I shall not be distressed much by what is going on down here if I can but learn that it leads up there. Is it the way home? Will it take me to the house? This will be a vast deal more important to me than all else. It may be a dangerous road, a rough road, a difficult road; but is it the way up there? If I do but know that, I shall not care for the difficulties of the hill, nor fear the danger of the descent. Shall I be looking for an easier road, a smoother road?

No. Is it the road? Is it the way there? If I am told there is a lion in the way, well, I have no fear: God is my strength. I cannot go without Him. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" were the words of Jesus. He had to suffer, so may we; but is it the way there, the way to the home on which my affections are set, the way to the home of blessing which the Lord has prepared? This settles every question, and delivers from ten thousand sorrows. I do not care for the difficulties nor the dangers: it is the way there. I am kept up

in it by the strength of God; I am kept up through it by the love of God.

“Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well” (v. 6). The valley of Baca is a place of sorrow and humiliation, but one of blessing also. To Paul it was the thorn in the flesh, something that made him despicable in his ministry to the Galatians. It was truly humbling, and called forth from him a thrice-repeated prayer. But when he heard the Lord say, “My grace is sufficient for thee,” he no longer pleaded for its removal. No; he rather gloried in his infirmity, that the power of God might be known.

This was the place of blessing to Paul: he found it a well. The valley of Baca was turned into a spot of untold intimacy and nearness to God. With some of us this valley may be the loss of that nearest our hearts, or the thwarting of the will, something that will humble us; but it is a place of blessing. We get far more refreshing from the painful than the pleasant things. The valley of Baca is made a well. Of which of your pleasant things can you say, Make it a well? The refreshment and the blessing come from that which has pained us, humbled us, emptied us of self! This is God's way of showing us what He is; and so, in passing us through the valley of Baca, He makes it a well.

So we read in 1 Thessalonians v., “In every-

thing give thanks." How is this to be done? Did Paul give thanks for the thorn, the very thing he supposed would hinder his usefulness?

Not whilst looking at the thing itself: it was only when his eye was fixed on the heart and the hand that had done it. There are many things in themselves that we cannot give thanks for: the snapping of the cord nearest the heart, or the cutting to pieces of that which our affections are set upon. We must see the love that has ordered it, and the hand that has appointed it; and then we can give thanks.

"The rain also filleth the pools." The Lord can make springs in the desert to meet His people's need, or send down rain from heaven to supply their wants. He knows neither difficulties nor impossibilities: to lean upon Him is undisturbed security. He will bring His people safely through every trial; and every fresh victory should increase the strength of their confidence in Him.

"Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed." In every sorrow God is our shield.

"Oh!" but some may say, "my sorrow is brought on by my sin."

Sad it should be so! But even then we can say, "Look upon the face of Thine Anointed." God can always look upon His face with delight; He is ever well pleased in Him: and

we can plead what Christ is. There is no position a saint can be in but that he may go to God for help. No; although his very sorrow is the fruit of his sin, and there is no other way of getting rid of your sin and out of your sorrow but by going to God, and hiding yourself behind His Anointed. You may not choose to say, Look upon *me*; but you can ever say, "Look upon the face of Thine Anointed." Christ is your only shelter. He is a covert in every storm; ah! even that which your own failure has brought upon you. There is no getting back to God but by hiding yourself in Christ, taking shelter behind Him.

There is just one other word about the way, and I have done.

Now, what are your ways? What is your walk in the way to the place you are going to? Is it in keeping with the character of the house? Are your ways suited to the home God has prepared for you? His own dwelling which He has prepared for you? Are you so behaving yourselves as to rejoice in the thought that this world is crumbling? Is the hope of the Lord's coming your daily delight? Does it influence you in the ten thousand details of your everyday life? Or are you so walking hand in hand with the world that the very thought of His coming fills you with shame?

May the Lord grant you grace to take heed to your ways! May you walk well-pleasing in

His sight caring more for His glory than your own ease !

“ No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “ Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jehovah.”

Sonship, and the Leading of the Spirit of God.

(Concluded).

COMMUNION with the Father and the Son is the normal state of the child of God ; and it is maintained only in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The world does not receive the Holy Spirit, “ because,” as our Lord said, “ it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him ” ; to His disciples, however, He blessedly added, “ But ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you ” (John xiv. 17).

All believers who know they are God’s children, know, in some feeble measure, the Holy Spirit, and something of His gracious operations and ways. Those who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them have a personal consciousness of God’s love, for it is shed abroad in their hearts ; they delight to bow to Jesus as their Lord as well as Saviour ; and they know

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that they are God's children. They realise also His power in ministering the precious things of the Son of God to them, while drawing their hearts upward to Christ, and outward for Christ.

Examples of the leading and operations of the Spirit abound in Scripture, not only in associating our hearts and minds with Christ, but always in the most suitable and seasonable way as meeting our circumstances and service. Let us look briefly at some of them.

In Acts ii., Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up to preach.

And to what did the Spirit of God lead him? His sermon, from beginning to end, was concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter refers his hearers first to the prophet Joel, who spoke of the Spirit being poured out. He proves that Psalm xvi. was fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. He quotes from Psalm cxxxii. to show that Messiah must be of the fruit of David's loins according to the flesh. He turns to Psalm cx. to show the fulfilment of the ascension and session of Christ at God's right hand, till He comes forth to judge, and His enemies are made His footstool. He also sets Christ before the people as the One who, in glory, received the Holy Spirit, and sent Him down. Peter brings in all his hearers guilty of the crucifixion of Christ, but earnestly com-

mends to them God's grace, as willing to give them remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We ask, Could there be a finer example of the Spirit's leading and operation in using the written Word concerning the glorified Saviour, consequent upon His finished work upon the cross? And could any line of things be more suitable to the preacher and the hearers in their then circumstances and need?

Let us look also at Stephen in Acts vii. How did the Spirit lead him?

We read that "he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The Spirit occupies him with the glorified Man on the throne of God, as an absorbing Object, and the most suitable ministry that he could have at that time. His testimony, therefore, was not one word about himself or his sufferings, but of Jesus. He said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Could there be a more touching witness of the Spirit's leading an afflicted soul into the present sustaining and comforting blessing of the ever-living Son of God? Can we conceive anything that could be more truly "meat in due season"? And what was its effect? Was he not so strengthened to bear his terrible suf-

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ferings that, in his measure, like our blessed Lord, he could pray for his murderers, and calmly commit his spirit to his Saviour, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"?

We read of John that he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day." And what did he see and hear and learn?

He *heard* a great voice as of a trumpet saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." He *saw* the Son of man, in His own faithfulness and grace, "in the midst" of the assemblies on earth. And he *learned* his own nothingness and weakness, the mystery of the Lord's person, and that He had died, and was alive again, and that for evermore. He felt the surpassing tenderness of His right hand laid upon him, he tasted the exceeding comfort of His "Fear not," and knew Him now in the place of authority over death and hades; for He held the keys of both.

Can anything, we ask, more fully show that, when the Spirit leads, He brings us to have to do with Christ; and that, too, in the best possible way to meet us in our present state or circumstances or service? How else could John have been fitted to discern and communicate to us the mysteries of the visions which were to pass before him for our guidance and untold blessing? Hence the next words were, "*Write* the things which thou hast seen," etc. Happy are those who thus go into ser-

vice from personal intercourse with the Son of God. How else can we expect to be divinely used instruments?

So clearly is the testimony of the Spirit connected with true thoughts of Christ, that the apostle John lays it down as a test of those with whom we come in contact, that "every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God: and every spirit who does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God" (N.T.), whatever their pretensions may be. So vital is this point that it is prefaced by the saying, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God." Such also not only "love the brethren," but are subject to the apostle's words, "He that is of God heareth us. . . . Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John iv. 1-8).

Look also at Barnabas when full of the Holy Ghost, and see what characterized his ministry. Did he not direct the young converts to have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes; "he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts xi. 23, 24).

Take the apostle Paul as another example, not only in all his epistles ministering Christ, variously and yet seasonably, to each and all; but he serves also to show us that when a man is under the Holy Spirit's leading, he will have such a keen sense of what dishonours the

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Lord, and perverts the truth of God, that his whole soul will be filled with holy indignation. He had anguish of heart, much affliction, and shed many tears over the Corinthian dishonour to Christ; he wept over professors, because they were ministering to the flesh, instead of reckoning themselves dead with Christ, and thus were "enemies to *the cross* of Christ," as he states in his letter to the Philippian saints (2 Cor. ii. 4; Phil. iii. 18). But on another occasion, when "filled with the Holy Ghost," he found one perverting the truth, and seeking to turn away another from the faith, and Paul "set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of *the Lord*? And now, behold, the hand of *the Lord* is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season," etc. (Acts xiii. 9-11).

We may be sure that, when the Spirit leads, He gives us to have to do with Christ, to honour, serve, and look for Him, and to see every thing in relation to Him, according to His own blessed word of truth. May we more rejoice that we are God's children, and as such look for the constant leading and operations of the Spirit, till Christ comes.

Christian Life in Relation to the Coming of the Lord.

I PURPOSE to take up a subject which I feel to be deeply important, the coming of the Lord Jesus; and to take it up, not proving it as a doctrine, but showing that it was originally a substantial part of Christianity itself.

The groundwork is Christ's first coming, and His atoning death; but when we look beyond the foundation, then we see that the coming of the Lord Jesus is not merely a bit of knowledge, but a substantive part of the faith of the Church of God, and that on which the moral state of the saints, and indeed of the Church of God, depends.

You will see, in going through the passages which I will now quote, that it connects itself, and is mixed with, every part of Christianity; characterizes it, and connects itself with every thought and feeling of the Christian. A person could not read the Scriptures with an unprejudiced mind without seeing it.

I take conversion. People say, What has that to do with the Lord's coming? That is part of what they were converted to, to wait for God's Son from heaven. This waiting for God's Son from heaven characterized their conversion; they were converted to serve God surely, but also "to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i. 10).

The Christian's position as to the coming of

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the Lord is, that he is waiting for Christ to come, according to His promise. People say He comes at death.

I reply, Do you make death the same as Christ? If this were the case, we should have Him coming hundreds of times, whereas we only read of His coming twice (Heb. ix. 28).

Shall I tell you what will happen when Christ comes? Resurrection! This is quite a different thing from death. The coming of Christ is, for the saint, to be the end of death, exactly the opposite.

I believe nobody can find a trace of the thought in Scripture that Christ comes at death. Instead of Christ's coming being death, it is resurrection. We go to Christ at death; it is not Christ who comes to us. Blessed it is "to depart, and to be with Christ"; "absent from the body, present with the Lord."

But I am to show that this thought of the coming of Christ mixes itself with and characterizes every part of Christian life.

In the first place we have it in *conversion*, as already said. They were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. I will turn to other passages in support of it, but I will go through Thessalonians first.

In the second chapter of the first epistle, at the end, the apostle speaks of what his comfort and joy in service were. He had been driven away by persecution from the midst of the

Thessalonians, and, writing to them, speaks of his comfort in thinking of them. But how? "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

He cannot speak of his interest in them, and joy, without bringing in the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Again, as regards holiness: "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love . . . to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thess. iii. 12, 13).

As to the death of a saint, they were so thoroughly looking for the Lord that if a person died they thought he would not be there ready to go to meet Him.

They were wrong in this, and the apostle corrects their mistake. But now people say, when a saint dies, we shall go after him, we shall follow him. Here there is not a word about it.

Suppose I were to go and say to a Christian now, who had lost some one dear to him, "Do not be uneasy, Christ will bring him with Him," he would think me wild, or find it utterly unintelligible; and yet that is the way the apostle does comfort them. "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (chap. iv.).

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He then shows the way He will do it. "We which are alive . . . shall not prevent them which are asleep." "Prevent" is an old word for anticipate, or go before. The first thing the Lord will do when He descends is to raise the sleeping saints. He is going to bring them with Him. If they have fallen asleep in Him, their spirits will have been with Him meanwhile; but then they will receive glory, be raised in glory, be like Him, as they had been like the first Adam; and, going to meet Him in the air, will be for ever with Him; and when He appears He will bring them with Him, and they will appear with Him in glory.

You get it in a general way in the fifth chapter, where he desires their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This hope, then, is a part of the Christian state in every aspect. Conversion, joy in service, holiness, a believer's death, the goal of blamelessness, all are connected with the coming of the Lord.

Turn now to Matthew xxv. The wise virgins take oil in their vessels, but they all go to sleep, and forget that the Bridegroom was coming. But what I have specially to inquire here is, What was the original calling?

The statement, clear and positive, is, that they went out to meet the Bridegroom, but while He tarried they *all* slumbered and slept;

they all forgot His coming, the wise as well as the foolish. But at midnight the cry is heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom!"

The thing that roused them up from their sleep was the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" The original object, then, of the Church was to go to meet Him who came; but even true believers forgot it. And, further, what awakes them from their sleep is their being again called out to meet Him at His coming. Then you get in "the talents" the same thing in regard to service and responsibility. He takes His journey, and tells them, "Occupy till I come."

(To be continued, D.V.)

A Fragment.

I HAVE no doubt that the state of things in England is trying at this present time (1876); but (query) has not that state which tries grown up out of the fact that men have acted beyond the known measure of their faith and light and spiritual power. I think it has been so. And the correction of this state is in a private and general humiliation before God. It is no use trying to hide oneself, or get out of the trouble. Faithfulness to God requires you to go through it, but go through it *with God*.

Joy and Praise ;

or,

A Memorial of Christ.

THE Lord's Supper is to be eaten as a memorial, or remembrance of Christ. This is His own interpretation of it. The bread sets forth His *body*, the cup His *blood*, accomplishing the remission of sins.

To eat and drink of this feast is to express our participation in the virtues of His sacrifice (1 Cor. x. 18). And it is thus eaten in remembrance of Christ, in token of the soul's fellowship with what His sacrifice has accomplished for sinners. It is therefore to be eaten with *thanksgiving*.

This remembrance of what the sacrifice of Christ has accomplished must be accompanied with *that*. No *supplication* is needed, because it is a finished work, a full remission, which the Table records.

To *pray about the forgiveness of sins* would be discordant with the voice of the Table; it

would be (quite unintended it might be) a reproach upon the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. It would be a building again the things which Christ had destroyed; and, in the language and sense of Gal. ii., making Him "the minister of sin," making His blood, like the blood of bulls and of goats, only the *remembrancer*, and not the *remitter*, of sin.

But to surround it with thanksgiving, to wait on the feast with praise for redemption, this would be honouring the work of the Lamb of God, which the feast sets forth; and, accordingly, it is always as thus accompanied that the Scriptures present it to us. Jesus, on taking the bread and the cup, "gave thanks" (Matt. xxvi.; Mark xiv.; Luke xxii.). He did nothing else. The words "blessing" and "giving thanks" are, to all moral intent, used in the same sense. And, in the like mind, the apostle calls it "the cup of blessing which we bless," the cup at the taking of which we bless, or speak well of the Lord; because by that death and blood-shedding of Jesus, which it sets forth, He has richly entitled Himself to praise, or to have His name spoken well of. And again, speaking of it, he says, that when the Lord parted the bread and the cup among His disciples, He simply "gave thanks" (1 Cor. xi. 24).

It *may* be accompanied with *confession of sin*, because it implies our utter death in tres-

passes and sins; and therefore the confession of that would not be discordant with it. But still we do not find such confession either *enjoined* or *observed* in any of the passages which refer to the Supper; but in them it takes the form of a simple eucharistic feast, or a season of thanksgiving for the remission of sins.

It says, as another has once observed, "Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more" (Prov. xxxi. 6, 7).

This reminds us that our "misery" is gone, and that our "heavy hearts" have been lifted up: it tells us, not like the blood of bulls and of goats, that sin is *remembered*, but that sin is *remitted*; this is its peculiar, characteristic voice. To give thanks in company with it is in *harmony*, to pray about our sins is *discordance*.

But the service of *self-condemnation* may well wait on this feast, because we are, by the remission of our sins, called unto holiness; just as of old, the Feast of Unleavened Bread accompanied the Passover; the Israelites celebrated their redemption from Egypt; but they also searched the house for leaven, that they might put away all that offended Him who had redeemed them. This was most fitting, and, indeed, without this the Lord's Passover was not kept.

And so with us, if we are not walking in

the Spirit, we are not behaving ourselves as the blood-redeemed people; we do not discern the Lord's body (1 Cor. x., xi.).

This is in as full harmony with the Table as thanksgiving. And the leaven should be put away both from the congregation (1 Cor. x.) and from our own persons (1 Cor. xi.); for the Supper shows forth the *Lord's death*: and the death of Jesus has this twofold sense: it publishes *remission of sins*, and also *God's hatred of sin*; it releases the *sinner*, but condemns *the sin*; and the Supper eaten, both with *thanksgiving* and in the spirit of *self-condemnation*, will be accordant with this: eaten with *prayer about our sins* will be utterly discordant. It is to be a *Passover* in union with the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*; and therefore there is to be the expression of conscious rescue from Egypt, the place of death, or scene of judgment; and this is *thanksgiving*. And there is to be also the expression of our renouncing that which brought in death, and this is *self-judgment*.

Such I believe to be the simple character which the Scriptures put on the Supper of the Lord. Many, indeed, and various have been the additions which human religiousness has attached to it; but the word of God reproves them.

There is no warrant for the thought of *consecrating the elements*, or of separating them,

by some process, to the service of the Lord's Table. The bread and the wine are laid on the table *as* bread and wine: broken and poured out to figure the body and blood of Jesus, given and shed for us; but no form or process is needed to give them title to lie on the Table for this use.

Neither, do I judge, have we warrant for asking God *to bless us in the observance of this service*; simply because it is rather our worship, or setting forth of His praise, than a waiting on Him for some benefit to ourselves, either in soul or body. *We praise Him* in this act, rather than ask Him to bless us. We speak good of His name in it, by setting out the memorials of what He has done; and do not supplicate Him to bless us.

I believe that if *the Word* were very simply attended to in this matter, this beautiful service would be relieved of much which now religiously encumbers it, and the Table would give forth no uncertain sound.

Thus: (1) *Supplication* about sin would be silenced as utterly discordant with the voice of the Table; (2) *Confession* of sin might be made, but no necessity for it would be felt by the worshipper; (3) *Consecration of elements* would be altogether refused; (4) Seeking for blessing would not be thought of.

These things would be laid aside, and the service would be *an act of worship*, or giving

the Lord the honour due to His name in this age, till He comes again, when He is to gather fresh honour from the lips and praises of His countless ransomed ones.

And it is this service, or worship, that ought to gather us every first, or resurrection-day. Other things may then be given to us of the Lord, such as the word of exhortation, or of teaching, or the voice and spirit of supplication; but we should go there to give the Lord His praise, such as the Table (which publishes, through the riches of His grace, the remission of our sins) does give Him. He has already blessed us; we should come together in the spirit of conscious victory over our enemies, tearing asunder all bonds, and silencing every thing that would charge or condemn us.

We should be gathered in a way worthy of His name, for mercy has rejoiced against judgment; the sword of the destroying angel has gloriously been stayed, and therefore the spirit of the worshipper sings, "In the time of trouble He shall hide me; He shall set me on a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

May His people thus come together and offer "the sacrifice of praise" (Heb. xiii.).

Christian Intercourse.

“ Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God ”
(1 Cor. x. 31).

IT is most needful, when about to offer a word of admonition, to set forth the proper ground on which such a word can be received.

The New Testament abounds in admonition, warning, and exhortation; but it clearly lays down the truth as to the position in which the believer is set, before ever he is called to listen to such things; and unless we understand, and practically enter into, that position, an admonition or a precept may lead to a spirit of legalism or bondage.

Now, as to the position of the believer, as set forth in the Scriptures of the New Testament, it is one of the *most* complete justification and acceptance. “ Justified from *all* things,” “ *complete* in Him who is the head of all principality and power,” “ accepted in the beloved ” (Acts xiii.; Col. i.; Eph. i.).

These are some of the expressions used by the Holy Spirit to set forth the believer’s position before God, a position founded on the accomplished work of Christ, with which, it is needless to say, the believer himself has had nothing whatever to do. God’s grace has assigned it to him; the blood of Christ has fitted him to occupy it; and the operation of

the Spirit has led him into the understanding and enjoyment of it.

His being in it, therefore, is the fruit of the combined action of THE DIVINE THREE IN ONE; nor can aught in him ever interfere with that combined action. The believer's justification, completeness, and acceptance, are as independent of himself and of everything in him, as is the position of the sun in the heavens. There it is; but who set it there? God. There and thus the believer is; but who set him there? God. Hence one is as independent of the believer as the other, for both alike are founded on what God is.

It is well to see this; well to have a perfectly unclouded view of what we are, and where we are; well to be led to pause in view of the actings of divine grace on our behalf; well to allow God to do with us as He will, to make us what He will, and set us where He will; assured, as we may well be, that all is to His infinite glory and praise.

We may think it all too good to be true: and too good it would assuredly be, were its truth, in any wise, dependent upon us; but not when its truth depends entirely on God.

It might be too good for us to get; but it is not too good for God to give. This makes all the difference. When God gives, He gives like Himself. The blessedness of the gift must depend upon the Giver, and not upon the

receiver. He GIVES perfect justification; He GIVES complete acceptance.

To whom? To *sinner*s. On what ground? On the ground of Christ's accomplished sacrifice. For what purpose? That they might be to the praise of His glory. (See John xvii. 2; Acts xiii. 39; Rom. v.; vi. 23; Eph. i. 6; Col. ii. 10; Eph. i. 12).

Hence, therefore, it is clear that no warning, admonition, precept, or exhortation, can, in the most remote manner, involve, affect, or interfere with, the believer's position and relationship. So far from this, the very fact of our being addressed in such a way proves, in the clearest manner, God's gracious recognition of our relationship.

If God gives me a command, the fact of His doing so proves that He recognizes in me a principle of life and power whereby I can both hear and obey. He would not call upon one "dead in trespasses and sins" to do anything. His command to such a one is to receive, as a free gift, eternal life in His Son Jesus Christ. But when one has gotten this life, is born again, has entered into an eternal relationship based upon redemption, then, and not until then, is he addressed in the language of warning and exhortation; and on his due observance of such language depends much of his present blessing, comfort, and usefulness.

We are prone to confound two things which differ very materially; namely, our eternal relationship to God as His children, and our present responsibility to Christ as His servants and witnesses.

The former is the result of the action of the divine will and power; as we read in the Epistle of James: "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

The latter, on the contrary, is a thing devolving upon us daily, and calling for much holy diligence in the prayerful study of the word, and waiting upon God. Many of us fail in answering to our responsibility to Christ, in manifesting Him in our ways, and in our practical testimony for Him; but this, blessed be God, does not touch our eternal relationship with Him, though it may and does most seriously interfere with our perception and enjoyment as children of God; yea, to talk of one without the other, is to be "deceived by vain words."

This train of thought leads us naturally to the immediate subject of this little paper; namely, Christian Intercourse, a subject of much more importance than might, at first sight, appear.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Born Again.

READ JOHN III.

THE truth connected with the Holy Ghost, together with Christ and His work, is the greatest safeguard against the error by which Satan is working in the present day. The enemy's craft must be met by the truth of God.

In this chapter we have the work of the Spirit in quickening souls; and this is brought out in contrast both with God's previous trial of Israel, and with man's natural power in the reception of outward evidence.

From chapter ii. 24, etc., we see the need of getting hold of God's truth for our own souls. The profession of Christ may be ever so sincere; but apart from life and fruit it is worth, and is, nothing.

The people saw He was the One who should come, the Person sent from God; and they had right thoughts about His works; and yet all *that* went for nothing, and was worthless, in the sight of God. The solemn question was, What was in man?

The conviction spread amongst them that Jesus was the Messiah, because of the miracles He did; and they were ready to have Him in their own way. Nicodemus said, "We [not I] know that Thou art a teacher come from God," etc.

But the wickedness of man's heart had not all come out. Man proved what he was in the treatment he gave the Lord Jesus, notwithstanding the undeniable evidence vouchsafed in His works that He was come from God. There are none so hostile to truth as those who know, but will not have it. The spies who had been up, and seen the land, were those active in speaking against it. You cannot go the way of the cross without having its trial and difficulty, as its infinite gain. The cross is not pleasant, of course; and it never was intended to be pleasant. Directly I see that Christ has a right and claim on my conscience, my nature rises to resist His power; I see He ought to have the first place, and that other things should give way. This I do not like. The cross must be contrary to our nature.

The Lord now meets Nicodemus with the declaration that he must be born again, or rather *anew*, which is a stronger word than "again," or "from above." It is the same expression in the original as "from the very first," in Luke i. 3.

You may find lovely qualities in human nature; but nature never loves Christ, where the cross and the glory come together. The new birth is a thing totally new. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Christianity does not alter it at all.

Man is in love with creation, and neither loves God nor believes His love. The creation is ruined, spoiled; not willingly, as man is, but still it is fallen. Man's will is gone away from God. His intellect may be all very well in its way; his disposition may be amiable; but you never find one who naturally seeks after God. Nay, you generally find the most amiable person the last to turn to God.

Man must be born entirely anew; he must come into heaven with a nature altogether distinct from that which he had got. Man will use his good qualities, as well as his bad, just as an animal, but with more intelligence. The eye must be opened. It is a new ground and way of perception, by which we can even see the kingdom of God.

There was neither holiness nor righteousness before the Fall. The original state [of man] was something distinct from both. Adam was innocent, but not properly righteous or holy. To apply innocence to God, or the Lord Jesus, would be absurd. God is holy; seeing what is bad, and abhorring it, which holiness, negatively at least, consists in.

A righteous man judges what is contrary to justice, and hates it. An innocent man did not know things in themselves good and evil, though of course he knew that it was his duty to obey God. Adam's sin was in trying to be

like God; our goodness is in desiring to be like Him. Ought we not to seek to be like God, to imitate Him, as Paul exhorts? (Eph. v. 1).

We are called by glory and virtue, and are seeking to remind our souls that God's counsel is that we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son. This one thing we should do: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. iii. 13).

Adam knew nothing of this; his whole moral nature was entirely different. In sinning, man got his conscience, and was ruined in getting it, because it was a bad one. Consequently he was afraid of the God he wished to be like. He lost innocence, and we never regain it, but we are renewed after the Second Man.

We are, after the image of God, created in righteousness and true holiness, made partakers of the divine nature, and brought to judge of sin as God judges it, and to love holiness as He loves it (Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10; 2 Pet. i. 4).

It is after God we are created again. Not only have we, as men, the knowledge of good and evil, which made the [first] man afraid of God, and hide himself, but now, in being born again, it is another thing. We have life in our souls in a divine way.

We have the holy moral nature that God has, and in this nature there is a positive delight in the righteousness of God, which does not condemn it, because it is the same. This new nature feeds upon, and delights in, what is of God, and is satisfied with the object before us, even Christ Himself. God has chosen us in Him, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. i. 4). He has us before Him in this the image of His own nature. In Christ we have all that God delights in brought out and displayed in the man. He is the perfect and blessed display of all God is, and He is the expression before God of what He has made us to God. We have the image of God in the man; and, more than this, we have what man is for God.

This quickening of the Spirit has a double character. It is death in both. We are dead, and are to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin," etc. (Rom. vi. 11). This is liberty. But there is death practically, or putting to death; and that is what we do not like, for this is the cross. We like the liberty, but not the mortifying, or putting to death, our members on earth.

The sentence of death that God has passed on flesh and sin is an unchangeable sentence; and it is a positive blessing to have done with the flesh, for it is a condemned thing. The sentence was executed upon Christ, the new

Man, that we might live after the power of that new Man, Christ.

There is an important point as to this, which is often confounded and mistaken. We must live that we may die; not die that we may live, as is often represented. Men talk of death before they have life; but they are wrong. Death, morally, is the consequence of having life. And this is just the difference between a monk (not using the word offensively) and a Christian. As a monk I mortify myself in order that I may live, instead of first having life, as a Christian, from God, that I may die.

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (v. 5). “Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth” (Jas. i. 18). God has begotten us by the word. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John v. 1). “He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true” (v. 33). “The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Ps. cxix. 130), and the effect of the light’s coming in by the word is to bring the judgment of everything in man, as it brings delight in that which is of God.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Without the Camp:

OR,

CARNAL ORDINANCES IMPOSED FOR A TIME.

READ HEBREWS X. 1, 10; XIII. 12, 13.

IN the last chapter of this epistle, the Spirit of God, speaking of the fact that "the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp," goes on to say, "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify [set apart] the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. *Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp*, bearing His reproach," etc.

Many are at a loss to know what is referred to by the term "camp"; yet it is very important to understand it, because those who love the Lord Jesus Christ are exhorted to "*go forth*" from it, unto Him.

In order to learn what is meant by the expression, we should first of all find out to whom the epistle was primarily and specially addressed; and, with God's blessing, it will soon be made plain.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to professedly converted Jews, who had been born and trained up under the law given by God to Israel at Mount Sinai, when they were *in camp* in the wilderness, where and when a system

of worship was ordained of God for this nation that was perfect in its place, but which did not suppose or require that the worshippers should be born again, and under which system Israel as a nation utterly failed.

The ninth chapter tells us that there were ordinances of divine service, and a *worldly sanctuary*, consisting of a tabernacle made with men's hands, and pitched on earth.

Then they had an ordained priesthood, men of a certain family set apart to come between the worshippers and God, of whom Aaron was the high priest. And this man was the minister of this sanctuary.

The high priest offered up an atonement for the people's sins once every year, besides the other sacrifices that were offered up continually; and, as already noticed, the worshippers were not all believers, though some of them were such; they were a mixed company of believers and unbelievers, all of them on the ground of *law-keeping for righteousness*.

We learn, then, that Judaism, or the system of worship at Jerusalem, was, in Paul's day, "*the camp*." And, dear Christian reader, is it not clear at a glance that *any system of worship of a Jewish nature and character*, and, in consequence, a system that the flesh and sight (the world, in fact) can more or less join in, is the *camp* in our day?

We know, as revealed by the Son of God

Himself, that "God is a Spirit : and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth " (John iv. 24); a thing impossible for the natural man to do. It requires men to be born of the Spirit, and sealed with the Spirit (Rom. viii. 8, 9; Eph. i. 13).

In John iv. 21 our Lord says, " Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, *nor yet at Jerusalem*, worship the Father." The time had come when the temple made with hands should be done away with. Men in the flesh had been thoroughly tested, and proved to be utterly incapable of obeying God's law, or truly worshipping Him either; and now a new order of things comes in; men born of the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, worship in spirit and in truth; not in a temple or tabernacle on earth, but in *the holiest*, that is, heaven itself (the only worshipping-place now) having boldness to enter there by the blood of Jesus (Heb. x. 19-22).

Therefore, if any system of worship now which has a worldly sanctuary, a temple made with hands, with an ordained priesthood, or class or men set apart to take a special place between the worshippers and God, where the worshippers place themselves under the law, this is the camp of our day.

God says, through the apostle, to those of His dear children who are in any such system,

“ Let us go forth unto Him [Christ] without *the camp*, bearing His reproach.”

“ But,” say some, “ why not stay inside, and do all the good you can where you are ? ”

We reply, Because “ to *obey* is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams ” (1 Samuel xv. 22).

Because God will not have Christianity and Judaism mixed up together, the new wine in the old bottles.

Because God will not have the world and the Church yoked together (2 Cor. vi.).

Because Jesus Christ has come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands. He was cast out by worshippers in the flesh (Jewish worshippers), and suffered outside the gate, at Calvary; proving that their worship was not a real thing; for if they had loved God, they would have revered His Son (John viii. 42). Yea, though these worshippers could point out in the Scriptures where Christ was to be born, not one foot did they go to find Him, but were troubled and distressed at the very thought of His being come (Matt. ii.)

He is now risen from the dead, and has entered into the holy place made without hands, even into heaven itself; not with the blood of bulls and goats, “ but by His own blood,” “ having obtained [not redemption for a year only, but] eternal redemption for us.”

And now the Man in the glory, the God-man, is our High Priest, a "Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. viii. 1, 2; ix. 11, 12, 24).

Again, though perfectly true that God told Moses to make the tabernacle, and Solomon the temple, for a place of worship on earth under the law, now He has opened heaven to all who believe, and they have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; heaven itself taking the place of the tabernacle and temple at Jerusalem as the Christian's worshiping-place, which we enter by faith, and in spirit (Heb. viii. 1, 2; ix. 24).

Then, though God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, giving them the law (a covenant of works) they failed under it; but the Christian (though under responsibility to obey, *as a child*) is not under law, but under grace (Rom. vi. 14), Christ having delivered us from the law and its curse, having been made a curse for us. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God" (Gal. ii. 19).

Unbelievers as well as believers were in the congregation of worshippers under the law; but God requires worship in spirit and in truth, and none but those who are converted and sealed by the Spirit of God, have the power and heart for such worship.

Christianity has taken the place of, and is a direct contrast to, Judaism, and God would not have us try to mix the two, and go back to the carnal ordinances of a worldly sanctuary, that were imposed only for a time (Heb. ix. 1, 10).

So the word is, "Let us go forth *unto Him without the camp*, bearing His reproach," etc.

Take notice that this is not a question of salvation. It is not that souls inside the camp are not saved. Indeed, it is the saved ones inside who are called upon to go outside (and no doubt many souls are being saved where the gospel is truly preached inside); but it is a question of obedience, and of worshipping God according to the principles of Christianity: surely a very important thing in the eyes of those who love the Lord Jesus.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Christian Life in Relation to the Coming of the Lord.

(Continued).

ANOTHER very striking fact as to this truth is, it is always presented as a present operative expectation. You will never find the Lord nor the apostles speaking of the Lord's coming, with the supposition that it would be delayed beyond the life of those to

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whom they spoke. It might be at cock-crowing, or in the morning; but they were to be waiting for God's Son from heaven.

In the parables referred to, the virgins who went to sleep were the same virgins as those who awoke up. The servants to whom the talents were entrusted were the servants who rendered an account of them at His return. We know centuries have passed; but He will not allow any thought of delay. "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching."

Again, what was the cause of the Church's ruin? It was, "My Lord delayeth His coming." It was not saying, "He will not come"; but, "He delayeth His coming." Then the servant began to beat the men-servants and maid-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; and this brings on his judgment.

If the bride loves the Bridegroom, she cannot but wish to see Him. Her heart is where He is. When the Church lost this she settled down to enjoyment where she was; she got worldly; she did not care about the Lord's return.

Turn now to Luke xii., and you will find how this waiting for Christ characterizes the Christian, and therewith the serving Him while He is away. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." They were to have

their loins girded, their lights burning. Such was the characteristic of a Christian. They were to be as men that waited for their Lord, to open to Him immediately; their affections in order and full profession of Christ, but watching for their Lord's return.

It is not [merely] having the doctrine of the Lord's coming. The blessing rests on those who are watching, "like men that wait for their Lord." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." They must be girded, and have their lights bright while He is away, and watch for His return; and then He makes them sit down to meat, and girds Himself, and comes forth, and serves them. Now they must be girded and watch; our rest is not here. "But," says the Lord, "when I have things all my own way, you shall sit down to meat, and I will gird myself, and come forth, and serve you. I will make you enjoy all the best that I have in heaven, and I will minister it to you; only be found watching."

Christ is for ever in grace a Servant according to the form He has taken. He is girded now according to John xiii. They would naturally think that if He were gone to heaven in glory, there was an end of His service to them; but He tells them, "I am going away; I cannot stay here with you, yet I cannot give you up; but as I cannot remain on earth with

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you, I must make you fit for Me in heaven. 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.' "

It is water here, not blood. "He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet." Life-giving conversion, as well as salvation, is fully wrought; but if we pick up dirt in the way, even as to communion and the walk, grace and advocacy are there to wash our feet, and have us practically fit for being with God where Christ is gone (John xiii.; 1 John ii.).

Growth there is, or ought to be; and as to the unchangeable cleanness of the new man, this is certain. But if I have not been watchful, I shall pick up dirt in my path. I cannot have this in heaven, nor in communion with what is there; and the Lord says in effect, "I am not going to give you up because I am going to God and glory; and so I must have you in a state suitable to that, and washed as you are [though not all, for Judas was there], keep you fit, restoring you when you fall. But you must be watching while I am away."

It is a comfort to me to know that all the virgins woke up in time; and I believe all His saints will wake up before the Lord comes. The difficulty to the heart in looking around is that so many do not receive it. But the true service of the Lord is connected with watching. That is the state to which the blessing and the heavenly feast are attached.

Then you find another thing : serving while He is away ; and the result of this is, " Of a truth I will make him ruler over all I have." It is far better to eat, as is said of Israel, of the finest of the wheat, and that in the Father's house ; but if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. With the serving in His absence, I get the ruling ; as the heavenly feast with watching. The Lord then goes on to what we had in Matthew, the saying, " My Lord delayeth His coming."

What the Lord is pressing as to *watching* and *serving* is, " I am coming again. You must be watching for me, as men that wait for their Lord." This was to be their character as Christians.

Supposing all the people in this town were actually watching, waiting for the Lord from heaven, not knowing the moment He would come, do you think the whole town would not be changed ?

A person once said to me that if everybody believed that, the world could not go on at all ; and the Christian cannot, in a worldly way.

If people were waiting for the Lord from heaven, the whole tone and character of their life would be changed. I may have the doctrine of Christ's coming, when I am really not looking for Him ; but I should not like to be heaping money together when the Lord comes.

Turn now to Philippians iii. Paul was run-

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ning a race, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." And how does he speak of Christ at the close of that chapter? "Brethren, be followers together of me . . . for our conversation" (our living association) "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," etc.

The Lord's coming affects all the truths of Christianity.

Christ is not now on His own throne at all. He is sitting now, according to the word in Heb. x. (and also in Psalm cx.), at God's right hand, sitting on the Father's throne, as He says Himself in the promise in Laodicea.

He has settled the question of sin for them at His first coming, and they have no more conscience of sins; they are perfected for ever. And to them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation. He is expecting in the heavens till His enemies be made His footstool.

Why does He say "His enemies"?

Because He is sitting down after He has finished all for His friends; that is, those that believe in Him.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

Christian Character.

THE courage, patience, firmness, and zeal of a Christian, are a perfectly distinct order of character from the courage, firmness, patience, and zeal of a natural man. Self-confidence, self-glory, self-preservation, self-exaltation, are the essential principles of one; confidence in God, self-renunciation, subjection to God, glory to God, abasement of self, being essential principles of the other.

So that the essential principles that formed the character of Paul as a natural man, were destroyed through the cross, in order that his soul should imbibe the life of Christ, which was the principle that formed his character as a Christian: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

Though Christ was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.

In any instance that we give up our own will, without sacrificing conscience, we are gainers. If but my dog exercises my patience, and makes me yield my will, he is a blessing to me.

Christ never willed anything but what was good and holy; yet how often was His will thwarted, how often hindered in designs of good!

Christian Fruitfulness.

“Every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John xv. 2).

THOUGH we have fellowship with Christ, and sit with Him in heavenly places, our earthly nature is still in a defiling world.

The world and Satan act on this nature. These, and its own sin (for it is still enmity to God and all that He loves) are continually drawing the believer to dispositions and objects that defile the conscience, hide from him the glory of Christ, and hinder the blessedness of fellowship with Him, and communion with the Father.

How is their influence prevented?

The Father purges every branch in the True Vine. While the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit lusts against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other (Gal. v. 17).

The Spirit has its desires, and directs the believer to everything opposed to the flesh; it fills him with communion and earnest desires to enjoy his fellowship with Christ and the Father.

Satan, the world and nature work against this.

How is the flesh subdued, that God's children may enjoy their precious liberty?

Precisely in this way : the Father purgeth them, that they may bring forth more fruit. He sends afflictions and trials, to increase their separation from the present world, and to weaken the sin that works in their members. Then the word within them, which is Christ, has dominion, and by Him they bring forth more fruit.

Thus does the Father purge every branch in the Vine. He ploughs up their hearts, to remove from them everything that prevents their fruitfulness. He suits the affliction to the particular need for it, that it might root out of their hearts the lust of other things, which tends to choke the seed.

The "other things" are all and everything which is not Christ.

Everything but Christ prevents our fruitfulness; the least contact with the world (for who can touch pitch, and not be defiled?), everything that nature desires and loves.

These causes do not destroy the seed where God has given it root, for it is the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter i. 23); but they are the reason why we bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty fold, instead of that hundredfold which affords such blessedness.

Christian Intercourse.

(Concluded).

BY Christian Intercourse, I do not mean that intercourse which we have on the benches of a meeting-room, or when gathered, on solemn occasions, for worship or edification. The intercourse to which I allude is of a much more common-place and familiar character; and, for that very reason, it needs much more solemn watchfulness, lest, in it, the enemy should betray us into anything unbecoming the solemnity, purity, and elevation which ought to mark the character and path of those who profess to be members of Christ's holy body, and temples of His Holy Spirit.

It is frequently most painful and deeply humbling to observe the character of intercourse which prevails nowadays amongst those whose professed principles would lead us to look for very different practical results. While marking the intercourse, and hearkening to the conversation which frequently obtains amongst professing Christians of the present day, one feels disposed to ask, Is it possible that these people really believe what they profess? Do they believe that they are "dead and risen with Christ"; that their calling is a heavenly one; that they are part of Christ's body; that they are crucified with Christ; that they are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit;

that they are pilgrims and strangers; that they are waiting for God's Son from heaven?

It may be that all these weighty principles are items in the creed to which they have given a nominal assent; but it is morally impossible that their hearts can be affected by them. How could a heart, really under the power of such stupendous truths, take pleasure, or even take part, in vain, frivolous, empty talk; talk about people and their circumstances, with whom and with which they have nothing whatever to do; talk about every passing trifle of the day?

Could a heart full of Christ be thus occupied? It is as impossible as that noon could intermingle with midnight. Yet professing *Christians, when they meet in the drawing-room, at the dinner table, and at their tea parties* are, alas! too often found thus occupied.

Nor is it only in our intercourse with our fellow-Christians that we forget ourselves, or rather forget the Lord; but also in our intercourse with the world. How often, when we meet with unconverted people, do we slip into the current of their thoughts, and find a theme in common with them!

Sometimes this is mourned over, sometimes it is defended, and the defence is founded upon an erroneous view of the apostle's expression, "I am made all things to all." This, surely, does not mean that he entered into the folly

and nonsense of worldly men. By no means. This would be to assert entirely too much. What then does the expression mean? It means that PAUL DENIED HIMSELF AMONGST ALL CLASSES OF MEN IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT "BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME." His object was to bring sinners to Christ, and not to please himself by entering into their vain and foolish habits of conversation.

Let us look at the Master Himself, our great Exemplar, and enquire, How did He carry Himself toward the men of this world? Did He ever find an object in common with them? Never. He was always feeding upon and filled with one object, and of that object He spoke. He ever sought to lead the thoughts of men to God. This, my beloved reader, should be our object too. Whenever, or wherever we meet men, we should lead them to think of Christ, and if we do not find an open door for that, we certainly should not suffer ourselves to be carried into the current of their thoughts. If we have business to transact with men, we must transact it; but we should not have any fellowship with them in their habits of thought or conversation, because our Master never had; and if we diverge from His path as to this, we shall soon sink into a low and unsanctified tone of spirit. We shall be as "salt that has lost its saltiness," and thus be "good for nothing."

I cannot doubt but that much of that lack of deep, settled, habitual peace, of which so many complain, is very justly traceable to the light and trifling habits of conversation in which they indulge; to their reading of newspapers and other light works. Such things must grieve the Holy Spirit; and if the Holy Spirit is grieved, Christ cannot be enjoyed; for it is the Spirit alone who, by the written word, ministers Christ to the soul.

I do not mean to deny that very many feel this lack of peace who do not engage in such things. By no means; but I say that these things must, necessarily, be productive of much serious injury to our spiritual health, and must superinduce a sickly condition of soul, which is most dishonouring to Christ.

It may be that many who have long been accustomed to high teaching, will turn away from such plain, practical principles as these; but we must expect this. It will be pronounced legalism; and the writer may be accused of seeking to bring people into a sort of bondage, and of casting them upon themselves.

I can only say, God forbid. I trust the opening statements of this paper will furnish a very decisive answer to such an accusation. If it be legalism to direct attention to the matter of conversation, then is it the legalism of the Epistle to the Ephesians; for there we find that "foolish talking and jesting" are

amongst the things which are not to be "once named among us, as becometh saints."*

Again, we read, "Let your conversation be always with grace, seasoned with salt." These are plain statements of Scripture; statements, moreover, found in immediate connexion with some of the most elevated doctrines of inspiration; and it will be found that where those plain statements are not allowed their full weight on the conscience, the higher truths are not enjoyed. I can neither enjoy, nor walk worthy of my "high vocation," if I am indulging in "foolish talking and jesting."

I quite admit the need of carefully avoiding all affected sanctimoniousness, or fleshly restraint. The sanctimoniousness of nature is fully as bad as its levity, if not worse. But why exhibit either the one or the other? The gospel gives us something far better. Instead of affected sanctimoniousness, the gospel gives us real sanctity; and, instead of levity, it gives us holy cheerfulness. There is no need to *affect* anything, for if I am feeding upon Christ, all is reality, without any effort. The moment there is effort, it is all perfect weakness. If I say, I must talk about Christ, it

* The word which is rendered "jesting," takes in what is commonly called "wit," "humour," "punning," "*repartee*," and such like. It is well to remember this. The word "jesting," would let a great deal pass which should come under the edge of the original word, which is a compound of two Greek words, signifying, "to turn well."

becomes terrible bondage, and I exhibit my own weakness and folly; but if my soul is in communion [with Him], all is natural and easy, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." It is said of a certain little insect, that it always exhibits the colour of the leaf on which it feeds. So is it exactly with the Christian. It is very easy to tell what he is feeding upon.

But it may be said by some, that "we cannot be always talking about Christ." I reply, that just in proportion as we are led by an ungrieved Spirit, will all our thoughts and words be occupied about Christ. We, if we are children of God, will be occupied with Him throughout eternity; and why not now? We are as really separated from the world *now* as we shall be *then*; but we do not realize it, because we do not walk in the Spirit.

It is quite true that, in entering into the matter of a Christian's habit of conversation, one is taking low ground. But, then, it is needful ground. It would be much happier to keep on the high ground; but, alas! we fail in this; and it is a mercy that Scripture and the Spirit of God meet us in our failure. Scripture tells us we are "seated in heavenly places in Christ"; and it tells us, also, not "to steal."

It may be said that it is low ground to talk to heavenly men about stealing; yet it is Scrip-

ture ground; and that is enough for us. The Spirit of God knew that it was not sufficient to tell us that we are seated *in heaven*; He also tells us how to conduct ourselves *on earth*; and our experience of the former will be evidenced by our exhibition of the latter. The walk *here* proves how I enter into my place *there*.

Hence, I may find in the Christian's walk a very legitimate ground on which to deal with him about the actual condition of his soul before God. If his walk is low, carnal, and worldly, it must be evident that he is not realizing his high and holy position as a member of Christ's body, and a temple of God.

Wherefore, to all who are prone to indulge in habits of light and trifling conversation, I would affectionately, but solemnly, say, Look well to the general state of your spiritual health. Bad symptoms show themselves; certain evidences of a disease working within; a disease, it may be, more or less affecting the very springs of vitality. Beware how you allow this disease to make progress. Betake yourself at once to the Physician, and partake of His precious balm. Your whole spiritual constitution may be deranged, and nothing can restore its tone save the healing virtues of what He has to give you.

A fresh view of the excellency, preciousness, and beauty of Christ is the only thing to lift

the soul up out of a low condition. All our barrenness and poverty arises from our having let slip Christ. It is not that He has let us slip. No; blessed be His name, this cannot be. But, practically, we have let Him slip, and, as a consequence, our tone has become so low that it is at times difficult to recognise anything of the Christian in us but the mere name. We have stopped short in our practical career. We have not entered as we should into the meaning of Christ's "cup and baptism"; we have failed in seeking fellowship with Him in His sufferings, death, and resurrection. We have sought the result of all these, as wrought out in Him; but we have not entered experimentally into them, and hence our melancholy decline, from which nothing can recover us but getting more into the **FULNESS OF CHRIST.**

If we find all seek their own, we must only be the more like Christ ourselves. It is a comfort the Head cannot fail, though the members do. You cannot put me in a place in which Christ is not sufficient in full power and grace. All we want is to find ourselves lowly at His feet, He the Counsellor of our hearts. If we are with God in light we know our own nothingness; and if all seek their own, His grace and blessedness come out the more.

The Lord Jesus in the Gospels.

THE four Evangelists had each a different service committed to him by the Spirit of God, in presenting to us the Lord Jesus.

The ease with which they fulfil their task bespeaks the inspiration under which they wrote, and the consciousness they had of the truth of all they were recording. It is like the ease with which He, whom they wrote about, did His works and delivered His lessons; and which ease, in like manner, bespoke the presence of that divine light and power that filled Him.

But whether we consider the Son who was the Actor in all these blessed scenes, or the Spirit who is the Recorder of them, our souls may well be sure of this, that God has brought Himself very near to us.

The Lord Jesus is variously before us in these Gospels. We see Him God and Man in one Person, and yet without confusion of the natures; One in eternal glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost; and yet, as truly, the Son of Mary, "made of a woman," His body formed in the Virgin's womb. We see Him the Son in the bosom of the Father; the Word made flesh declaring God; the Son of God, the Christ, the Son of man, the Son of David, Jesus of Nazareth, the Servant, the sent One, the sanctified One, the given One, the sealed

One, the Lamb; and then the risen, the ascended, the glorified One. In such titles and characters we read of Him.

Various also in conditions and circumstances is He seen by us. Very chequered surely was His daily life. He was always a Stranger, a solitary One, and yet none so accessible. He was in continual collision with the rulers; teaching the people; counselling, warning, enlightening the disciples that followed Him; in nearer fellowship with the Twelve; or dealing still more closely and livingly with individual souls. He knew the tempers of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians; and He had words in season for each. All manner of persons He had to answer, all manner of diseases to heal, all kinds of need and infirmity to relieve; cases of all sorts making demands on Him continually, and, as we say, unexpectedly. His whole life was ever holding out an invitation to the burdened, afflicted world around Him. In these different connections we see the Lord.

At times, likewise, He is scorned and slighted, watched and hated; retiring, as if to save His life from the attempts of the enemy.

At times He is weak, followed only by the poorest of the people, wearied and hungry, ministered to by some loving women who knew themselves to be His debtors.

At times He is in all gentleness compassion-

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ating the multitudes, or companying with His disciples.

At times He is in strength, doing wonders, or letting out some rays of His personal glory; the realms of death, and the powers of unseen worlds, being subject to Him.

Thus and thus is He again before us, as we read the Evangelists. "He that descended is the same also that ascended," surely we may say, in this sense (Eph. iv. 10). He will ask for a cup of water at the hand of a stranger, because He is weary with His journey; though He will turn water into wine for the use of others. He will ask the loan of a boat from a fisherman, when the people press on Him and throng Him. He will pass on as a traveller, that would go further, and not enter, unbidden, the dwelling of others. And yet, when occasions demanded it, He would claim a beast from the *owner* of it, as having the title of the *Lord* to it; or let it be known that the right hand of power in the highest was His seat, and the clouds His chariot.

The world would not contain the books that would be written, if all were told; but what is told is told for our blessing, that we may know Him, and live by that knowledge, and love Him, and trust Him.

What is the Holy Ghost's work in the apostles, whether speaking to sinners by

preaching, or teaching saints by epistles, but unfolding the Jesus whom the evangelists have, under Him, already given to us? Surely Jesus is everything. "Christ is all." And by different persuasives and reasonings we are challenged to make everything of Him. Nothing is left for our own speculations; absolutely nothing.

We have God Himself revealed in our own nature, in our own world, in our own circumstances. Well might kings and prophets have longed for such a privilege. But they had it not. It is ours, and it is beyond all price.

We are not left to gather our knowledge of God from description; we see and hear and learn for ourselves through personal manifestation, who and what He is. We sit before His image, His likeness in the Lord Jesus. The gospel is "the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. iv. 4). Scripture, as I may speak, lets God show Himself by His acts, and does not take the method of describing Him. He has not committed the revelation of Himself to the pen of even inspired description. He has graciously chosen to be His own Revealer, in personal, living action, by His own sayings and doings, that simplest and surest way of making Himself known, the way in which the wayfaring man may not err, and in which the child need not mistake his lesson.

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And in accordance with this, we see the Lord, during His life, in constant activity. For there is deep meaning in that activity. He was by it ever pressing God or the Father upon the notice of sinners; and this constant diligence in doing and in speaking tells us that He would have us learn *much* of God. It seems to tell us, that we are to acquaint ourselves *largely* with Him, in all that, at least, in which such knowledge is good and sweet and profitable, suited to us in our necessities and for our blessing.

It is not by treatises or discourses, but by [His] personal activities in our own ordinary circumstances, we learn Him; and, therefore, the simpler we are, the more like children (who learn their lesson rather than discuss it), we carry ourselves, the more surely shall we find Him, and reach Him, and know Him.

The divine nature was found in His person, the divine character in His life. And this gives us an interest in every passage of His life, however small or occasional or ordinary it may be. For he who traces the life and death of Jesus reads God, or the characteristics of the divine moral glory.

And I ask, beloved, Did this image, this glory, as it shone in the face of Jesus, alarm? Had sinners to treat it as Israel treated the glory which shone in the face of Moses? Did the poor convicted one need that the Lord

should put a veil on His face, as Aaron and the children of Israel required Moses to do?

The Samaritan was convicted as deeply and as thoroughly as ever Sinai would have convicted her. Jesus had *all* the secrets of her conscience out. But did she withdraw herself?

The sinner in the temple is before Jesus as one whom the law would have stoned; but does she hide herself? Does she find that light oppressive or overpowering, which was then filling the place, and which had emptied it of her accusers?

And I ask again, Did disciples, who walked with Him every day, tremble before Him? Did they wish Him away, as though they felt His presence too much for them?

Nothing of this. They had sorrow when He talked of leaving them; and when they had indeed lost Him, as they judged, they were found weeping (Mark xvi. 10). They never walked with Him as though they wished a veil had been on His face.

And His rebukes made no difference. To their spirits such rebukes, though they were sharp at times, were never the thunders of Mount Sinai. They felt the holiness of His presence, and were ashamed to let out the secret of their heart; but they never desired His absence.

What privilege, what consolation!

(To be continued, D.V.)

Without the Camp:

OR,

CARNAL ORDINANCES IMPOSED FOR A TIME.

(Concluded).

WHEN the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, there were many thousands of Jews that believed, and they were all zealous of the law (Acts xxi. 20).

If we compare dates, we find that God, in long-suffering goodness and mercy, allowed the believing Jews to remain in "*the camp*" for perhaps thirty years after Pentecost; and so Christianity and Judaism existed together for some years (Acts ii. 46, 47; xxi. 20-25), for God had not told His people to leave it as yet.

However, after Paul had gone to Jerusalem, and had been persuaded to go to the temple-worship again, to please the many thousands of Jews that believed, and had nearly lost his life at the hand of the unbelieving portion of Jewish worshippers, he was sent a prisoner to Rome, and probably from there wrote this very epistle; the Spirit of God using the apostle to call on the converted Jews to separate from the camp altogether, the time having come when God would no longer have His children go on with Judaism.

It was very trying in Paul's day, for one brought up as a Jew, to obey this call, and

so it is in these days. But if we love Him who gave Himself for us, we ought to show our love to Him by obeying His commandments and His words (John xiv. 21-23). And if there is reproach to be expected on obedience, let us not forget that it is *His reproach*. He has Himself been through far worse than any of us, and His love and His power are with us and for us, to carry us through; yes, and even to enable us to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for His sake.

As we are to “go forth *unto Him* without the camp,” where, outside the camp, shall we find Him? and in what special way is He to be found there?

Christian brother or sister, there is a special place outside the camp where the Lord vouchsafes to be, and to manifest Himself in a very special and peculiar manner to faith, and it is, “Where two or three are gathered together unto [not in] My name, *there* am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20).

The place, then, is where the two or three, or twenty or thirty, or two or three hundred, are gathered together *unto His name*; and the special way in which He vouchsafes to manifest Himself there *to faith*, is not to be described in words. It is to be *felt* and *enjoyed* by those who believe and obey His words; His actual, but not of course bodily, presence being in the midst.

Oh, that all His dear people believed it !

It should be understood that to be gathered together thus does not do away with divinely appointed ministry in the Church of God. There is a ministry ; there are gifts given unto men ; there are *evangelists*, *pastors*, and *teachers*, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of [not a sect, but] the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11, 12).

The apostles we have in their writings. But these gifts are not given to lead Christians in worship ; they are, as the members of one's own natural body, for the use of the whole body ; but the Head is alone that which all are to look to, to lead and guide, especially in worship. And it is Christ who is the Head of His body, the Church, of which all true Christians are members (1 Cor. xii. 12). And He really does lead by His Spirit where He is owned as present, and looked to as in the midst (Matt. xviii. 20), and given His proper place, the place that only He has a right to, or is qualified to fill.

Scripture plainly shows us that the observance of human ordinances in connection with the worship of God is contrary to His word. Christians, in the time of the apostles, came together on the first day of the week to break bread and worship Him. The order and manner of their meeting are plainly declared

in 1 Corinthians xiv., and in Acts xx. 7; Romans xii.; 1 Corinthians x., xi., xii.; and Ephesians iv.

“The natural man cannot worship God. Worship flows to God, the Father, and the Son, in the power of the Holy Ghost, from hearts happy and free. The recognition of an earthly sanctuary and priesthood is a return to Judaism. Worship in spirit and in truth must be by divinely appointed worshippers, drawing near with *a true heart* within the veil, in the holiest of all, in *the true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, and not man (Heb. x. 19-22; viii. 1, 2).

“Now, the Lord’s table is pre-eminently the place where Christians worship. The commemoration of the death of Christ is that which fills the soul with adoring praise to God for all that He is in Himself, and all that He has wrought for His own glory, and our blessing through the gift of Christ. And when the saints of God are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus around His table, Himself in the midst, to remember Him, and to show His death, *the Holy Ghost* is the power by which the hearts of the saints are led out in worship, praise, and thanksgiving. And likewise whenever the saints come together in assembly.

“In 1 Cor. xii. we are taught that ‘*the manifestation of the Spirit*’ is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by

the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, *by the same Spirit*. . . . but all these worketh that *one and the self-same Spirit*, dividing to *every man severally as He will*.'

"Some of the gifts there enumerated are not now bestowed; but others are, and it is our privilege and responsibility both to use and profit by those that are still given. The whole teaching of this passage is in opposition to the idea of one man assuming authority to be sole minister in the assembly of God. This is further confirmed in 1 Cor. xiv., where we have the saints assembled, and the various gifts in exercise (see also 1 Peter iv. 10, 11). And in Philippians iii. Paul also says, 'We are the circumcision, which worship God *in [by] the Spirit*, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

"To refuse *the manifestation of the Spirit* through any Christian brother in the assembly is to *quench the Spirit*, which the apostle exhorted the young saints at Thessalonica not to do (1 Thess. v. 19). But whilst recognizing the presence of the Lord in the midst, and *the working of the Holy Ghost* in the assembly (1 Cor. xii. 11), it is all-important that the saints should not believe every spirit, but try them '*whether they are of God*': because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby *know ye the Spirit of God*: Every

spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God : and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God : and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come ; and even now already is it in the world ' (1 John iv. 1-3).''

Born Again.

READ JOHN III.

(Concluded).

“**T**HAT which is born of the Spirit is spirit ” (v. 6). There is the communication of a new nature in believing ; and when born of God, the truth sanctifies and cleanses. There is “ the washing of water by the word ” (Eph. v. 26), but this cannot be till after we are born of the Spirit by the word. There would be no sense in saying, That which is born of water is water ; but that which is born of the Spirit is of the spiritual nature of God, not of man’s nature.

The “ living water ” made the woman at the well, to whom Jesus spoke, hate herself. It detects what is in man. Hence Christ could say to His disciples, “ Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you ” (John xv. 3). In the new and holy nature, in which I am created of God in Christ, I can now take up everything that I delight in, and I can judge

everything contrary to it. Thus the word has a cleansing power.

Baptism may be the expression and figure of it here, as the Lord's Supper embodies the truth of John vi. ("Whoso eateth My flesh," etc.); though I do not say that the Lord referred to either institution, but to the reality of which each is the sign. The substance of the thing is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who came by water; not by water only, but by water and blood (1 Peter iii. 21; 1 John v. 6).

It will not do to look at ourselves with approbation. See what is said of the king of Tyre (Ezek. xxviii.). We must not look at self, nor take pleasure in it. We want an object outside ourselves; even the renewed man does. The moment there is the communication of the divine nature, there must be delight in Christ Himself.

This is brought out in this double way in John v., vi. In chapter v. there are dead sinners quickened, or raised. This speaks of God communicating the divine nature. I do not speak of faith now; but it is God's own power that is spoken of, God quickening.

In chapter vi. we get faith still more fully insisted on: and here is the object of my faith presented. This is perfection: to be so occupied with Christ, as to be forgetful of self.

While told to reckon ourselves dead, we are looked on as dead already in Christ.

How is this?

Christ is looked on as coming down into the place of death; that there, where I was without stirring, Christ might be, and rise up out of it for my deliverance. Because of what He suffered on the cross, as manifested in the power of His resurrection, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). God will have none of the old things now. They are defiled and corrupted and good for nothing. "All things have become new," not renewed.

"In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is the eternal life that was with the Father and is manifested unto us. This is not the man that was cast out of Paradise.

How then can God and man be connected? "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." There was the insuperable barrier of man's will on one side, and the power of death on the other. Therefore He says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" But "if it [the corn of wheat] die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "The exceeding greatness of His power," etc. (Eph. i. 19), is in resurrection. Then, passing over the allusion to the Church, in the next chapter we

read, "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," etc. In connection with, and the basis of, it all is Christ, who is dead and risen, with whom we are quickened together. The Second Man has not His place as Head of the family, except by death first.

Why?

Because redemption could not have been wrought. Nor would it have been, as now, a question of God's righteousness. These being accomplished, He is entirely and in everything fitted to be the Head of the new creation.

This new link is wrought by the word. The living word, by the Spirit, is the power, and resurrection-life with Christ is the standing into which we are brought.

Christ, we may observe, speaks to Nicodemus about the things that he, as a Jew, ought to have understood (compare Ezek. xxxvi.). He says, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

God's earthly things were not evil or fleshly things, but the promised earthly portion which the Jews were to look for. In the latter day they must be sprinkled with water, and have a new heart from the Spirit, before they can inherit. This Nicodemus should have known. Then there are the heavenly things, which are better: "The wind bloweth where it listeth," etc. There is the sovereign acting of His grace.

He will take any poor sinners of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, and bring them into the blessing He has to give. "God so loved the world." This goes beyond the Jews. It is not here that God so loved Israel.

For all alike Christ was needed. For the best, the Son of man must be lifted up, and for the worst God would give His only begotten Son. Under promises, law, or nature, death must come in, if man is to be saved. In nothing can they be taken up in their own title.

What are we brought into by that which Christ has done? He says, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Here was the double revelation of God. Christ is speaking as a divine Person, and as one who has seen divine glory. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). He knew, and saw, as *One familiar and at ease with the Father and the Holy Ghost, with the glory of the Godhead.* He was Himself in the unity of the divine essence. And though we were (not only men outside it all, but) fallen men, yet now, as born of God, what are we not brought into! We have resurrection-life in Him; we are one spirit with the Lord. It is not the poor thing of the mere renewal of good qualities; but it is Christ, the Son, Himself making us partakers of His own things.

Christian Life in Relation to the Coming of the Lord.

(Continued).

HAVE all your sins been put away out of God's sight? If not, when will it be done? (1 Pet. ii. 24). That you grow in hatred of them all, all right! But if they are not borne and put away on the cross, when will it be done? Can you get Christ to die again? Can you get anyone else to do it? If it is not done, it will never be done at all. Beloved friends, if the work is not finished, it will never be done at all. But it is done, and therefore He says, the worshippers once purged "have no more conscience of sins. . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews x. 2, 14).

If you look now at Col. iii., you will find the same thing in its full result held out as our hope. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

The first promise He gave the disciples when going away was His coming again. Do not be troubled, I am going to prepare a place for you. Do not be uneasy, I cannot stay with you, so I must have you up there with me; and the first thing is, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

It is not one by one by death, but by resurrection for the dead, and change for the liv-

ing, His actual coming to receive them, raised or changed, to be with Himself where He was gone, and like Himself, that we shall be in glory with Him.

Again, at His departing from His disciples left down here, what was the last they saw of Him?

They saw Him go up before their eyes, and the angel said to them, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner."

The truth of His coming is wrought into the whole texture of the Christian life.

What is Scripture's last word? "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii.). In the same way you get it at the beginning, with warning and threatening, Jesus Christ, Faithful Witness, the First-begotten, etc. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel," etc. "I am . . . the bright and morning star."

Now I get what these saints who were watching, and those only, see. There is no star to be seen when the sun is risen. They see the morning star while it is yet early dawning; for the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Here He calls Himself "the root and offspring of David; the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come."

(To be concluded, D.V.)

What is the Christian's Position? and what is its Foundation?

THE word of God is the only source of light as to these questions, and its utterances are the only absolute authority on which the soul can rest.

God has been pleased to fully reveal His mind. He has spoken plainly as to what He is in His own nature, character, righteousness, holiness, truth, love, grace, goodness, and mercy. He has told us of man's lost and ruined condition, and his distance and alienation from God. He has told us of Christ and His work, and of His provisions in Him for the sinner's need. The ruin and the remedy are both unfolded; and He has told us how the remedy is applied, with all its blessed, wondrous, eternal results, for those who are the happy subjects of His grace.

How important, then, that we give heed to what He says, and lay firm hold of the infallible utterances of "the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"!

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteous-

ness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy iii. 15-17).

Let us hear its testimony as to

I.—THE CHRISTIAN'S POSITION.

A Christian is one who is born again. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). Have *you* been born again?

A Christian is a child of God. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16). Are *you* a child of God?

A Christian is a possessor of everlasting life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). Have *you* everlasting life?

A Christian is one who has forgiveness of sins, and is justified. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "Being justified by faith" (Rom. iv. 7, 8, iii. 24, v. 1.). Have *you* been forgiven and justified?

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A Christian is one who is *in Christ*. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans viii. 1). Are *you* in Him?

A Christian is one who is sealed with the Holy Ghost. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). Have *you* been sealed?

A Christian is one who is united to Christ by the indwelling Spirit, and is a member of His body. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 15-17). "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13). "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." "The Church, which is His body" (Eph. i. 22; v. 30). Are *you* a member of Christ? Does the one Spirit which dwells in Him, and in all believers, dwell in you, thus uniting you to Him and to them?

A Christian is one who has put on Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27). Have *you* put on Christ? When men see your ways, your walk, your works, can they say, There is a man who has put on the true soldier's uniform, and who honours it?

Let us now consider the testimony of Scripture to

II.—THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN'S POSITION.

It is when the soul enters into an intelligent apprehension of Christ's work for us, through receiving God's testimony about it, that solid, abiding, eternal peace is known.

We are told in Colossians i. 20 that peace has been made through the blood of Christ's cross. What the *sinner* could not settle God has settled Himself, once and for ever, by that blood. Peace is made, and is the portion of every one who receives His testimony.

The work of Christ on the cross has a double bearing: God-ward and man-ward. (1) He died to glorify God, and satisfy His offended Majesty as to the whole question of sin; and (2) He died to meet the need of the guilty.

This is typified in the two goats of Lev. xvi., which were both types of Christ, in connection with Israel's great annual day of atonement.

One of these was slain, and the blood carried in, and sprinkled on the mercy-seat, God's throne in Israel. This was to satisfy the requirements of the One who dwelt between the cherubim.

The other goat was for Israel; and on its head were confessed the sins of the people, which were then borne away into a land not inhabited.

The same principles are found in Rom. iii.

and iv. In chapter iii. 25, Jesus is set forth a propitiatory, or mercy-seat, "through faith in His blood," and it is this blood on the mercy-seat which declares God righteous in justifying: "That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (v. 26).

In chapter iv. 25, Jesus "was delivered *for our offences*, and was raised again for our justification." This answers to the bearing away of the sins by the scape-goat.

Not only has Jesus rendered satisfaction to God, but He has borne our sins (that is, the sins of those who believe), and removed them for ever; so that God can say, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more" (Heb. x. 17).

It is the knowledge of this that purges the conscience, and gives true peace.

On the ground of the infinitely precious blood of Jesus, by which He has glorified God about sin, God is presented as a Saviour-God to all men; as it says, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. ii. 4, 5).

But beyond this, those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are assured that their sins were borne by Him, and are blotted out, and

never can be laid to their charge. Precious testimony !

But this bearing of sins under God's judgment is a solemn matter. It will be so for the unbeliever in eternal woe ; and it was infinitely so for the holy Victim on the cross.

God *must* punish sin, either in the person of the sinner, or in the Person of Him who came to save. Man heaped upon Jesus shame, reproach, indignity, and suffering, according to the measure of his cruel hatred and wicked ingenuity. But beyond all this, there was an ocean of suffering which no creature can ever fathom. This was connected with the bearing of sins under the judgment of God.

In the garden of Gethsemane, the night He was betrayed, a terrible cup was presented to Him. Prostrate on the ground, He prayed three times over that it might pass from Him. " And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly : and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." What was there in that cup to bring such pressure on soul and body ? He had not yet tasted it ; but the very anticipation of drinking it called forth that agonizing prayer, and wrung out that bloody sweat. It was the cup He must drink at the hand of God on the cross, a cup filled to the brim with God's wrath and judgment against sin.

On the cross God abandoned Him, and from

the heart of the Saviour was wrung that woe-ful cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Never before had there been anything like this. When, in baptism, He took His place with the repentant Remnant of Israel, a voice from heaven saluted Him, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased."

When in the wilderness, tempted of the devil, and without food for forty days, an angel ministered to Him.

Even in Gethsemane, when His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, an angel was sent to *strengthen* Him.

But at the cross all was changed. There He was drinking the cup. He was forsaken of God. The darkness covered Him. Waves and billows of judgment rolled over His holy soul. No comforting voice from heaven was there; no ministering or strengthening angel. There, alone, forsaken of God, lover and friend far away, He drank that bitter cup, that cup of unmingled wrath. IT IS AN HOUR THAT STANDS ALONE; NONE LIKE IT IN THE ANNALS OF ETERNITY.

One's soul shudders at the awful sight, and asks, Why, why did God's holy One suffer thus?

The answer is plain: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was

upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all " (Isa. liii. 5, 6). " For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin " (2 Cor. v. 21). " Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree " (1 Peter ii. 24).

This, then, was the reason : He was made a sin-offering : "*our* sins," "*our* iniquities" were laid on Him, and He bore them under judicial wrath, being "made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13).

It was GOD who laid our sins on Him. "THE LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "It pleased THE LORD to bruise Him." "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts : smite the Shepherd" (Zech. xiii. 7).

The wounding, the bruising, the chastisement, the stripes, the smiting, the forsaking, were all from GOD, who was dealing with sins as laid on the atoning Victim. Oh ! think what it must have been to the holy Son of God. The sins of all His people, all known to God ; none forgotten, none passed over, all counted up and charged to Jesus ; sins great, and sins small ; sins of omission, and sins of commission ; sins done in secret, and sins done in the light ; foul deeds of shame, and

dark deeds of horrid wickedness; an accumulation of sins past all human numbering, all laid on Him as He hung upon the cross. Oh, what a load to bear!

Is it any wonder the thought of drinking the cup wrung forth the bloody sweat? Is it any wonder His holy soul shrank from contact with the awful load, and from entering that abyss of wrath?

But He has finished the work which God gave Him to do. He has glorified God, and met the sinner's need. And God has witnessed to the completeness of the work by raising Jesus from the dead. He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). Blessed, wondrous work! He shall indeed see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. A glorious harvest shall be gathered in when the reaping-time comes. Unnumbered millions of ransomed men, redeemed both soul and body, fashioned into His glorious likeness, and made meet companions for Him in glory, shall be His reward. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

And now, fellow-believer, have you stood by and watched the work of Christ on the cross? Or, in other words, have you received God's

testimony to it? Have you seen God counting up all your sins and laying them on Jesus, and then unsheathing His sword against Him? Have you seen the precious blood shed, which washes out the foulest stains of sin? And then, have you seen God raising Him again from the dead? Did He raise Him with your sins still on Him?

Jesus is sitting on the Father's throne to-day. Are your sins on Him there? No, that could not be; no sin shall ever enter there. When God laid your sins on Jesus at the cross He drew His sword, and *smote* Him, and the shedding of His precious blood made atonement for them, so that God in righteousness could justify you from them; and His raising of Christ from the dead is proof that He is satisfied. *God* is satisfied. Are *you* satisfied? Peace has been made, and proclaimed; and, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Oh, what solid ground! It is God's own ground. And as surely as your heart receives God's testimony to it, you are saved, forgiven, justified, accepted, and made one with that risen and glorified One.

May your soul rest with the simple faith of a child on God's testimony to the precious work of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus in the Gospels.

II.

WE can well understand the greater ease with which we could receive a person of distinction at our house, than go and visit him at his. But a visit from him would be the surest way of preparing us to pay a visit to him, and see him in those conditions and circumstances which are properly his, and higher than ours.

And after this manner is it between the Lord and us. Who can tell it in its blessedness! He has been here, in the midst of our circumstances, as the Son of Man who came eating and drinking, showing Himself in the gracious freedom of one that would gain our confidence. He walked and talked with us as a man would with his friend. He knew us face to face. He was in our house. And after He rose, He returned to us, if not to our house, to our world; for the resurrection-scenes were all laid there. He was then on His way to His own place; but again He tarried in ours, that the links between us might be strengthened. For then, after He had risen, He was the same to us as He had been before.

Change of condition had no effect upon Him; blessed to tell it. Kindred instances of grace and character, before He suffered and after He rose, show us this abundantly. Late

events had put the Lord and His disciples at a greater distance than ever companions before had known. They had betrayed their unfaithful hearts, forsaking Him and fleeing in the hour of His weakness and danger; while He, *for their sake, had gone through death, tasting the judgment of God upon sin.* And they were still poor Galileans, and He was glorified with all power in heaven and on earth.

But all this wrought no change in Him. "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," as an apostle says, could do that. He returns to them the very Jesus they had known before. He showed them His hands and His side, that they might know that it was He Himself. Yea, we may add, He showed them His heart, and His thoughts, and His ways, His sympathies, and considerateness, and all His affections, that in another sense they might know that it was He Himself.

I would not stop to offer the evidence of this from the Evangelists; it so abounds, addressing us on every occasion in which we see the Lord in resurrection, if we do but duly heed it. But if I might for a moment pass the bounds of the Evangelists, and look at the ascended Jesus in the Book of Acts, there we find the same identity. Jesus here in ministry, Jesus in resurrection, Jesus in heaven, is the same Jesus; for from the heavens He seems to delight in knowing Himself by the name He

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had acquired among us and for us, the name which makes Him ours by the bond of a common nature, and by the bond of accomplished grace and salvation. "I am Jesus," was His answer as from the highest place in heaven, when Saul, on the road to Damascus, demanded of Him, "Who art Thou, Lord?"

What shall we say, beloved, of the condescendings, the faithfulness, the greatness, the simplicity, the glory and the grace together, that form and mark His path before us? We know what He is this moment, and what He will be for ever, from what He has already been, as we see Him in the four Gospels. And we may pass into His world in all ease and naturalness when we think of this.

He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," in His own proper glory. With Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," according to His essential divine nature. But so, in His knowledge of us, His relationship to us, His affections for us, and His way with us.

After He had risen, and had returned to His disciples, He never once reminded them of their late desertion of Him. This tells us of Him. "I know no one," says another, "so kind, so condescending, who is come down to poor sinners, as He. I trust His love more than I do any saint; not merely His power as God, but the tenderness of His heart as Man.

None ever showed such, or had such, or proved it so well. None have inspired me with such confidence. Let others go to saints or angels, if they will; I trust Jesus more."

Yet this is but one ray of the moral glory that shone in Him. What a sight it is to see, if we could but look at it in its full measure! Who could have *conceived* such an object? It must have been exhibited, ere it could have been described.

But such was Jesus, who once walked here in the unclouded fulness of that glory, and whose reflections have been left by the Holy Ghost on the sacred pages of the Evangelists. What attractiveness there must have been in Him for the eye and the heart that had been opened by the Spirit! This is witnessed to us in the apostles. Doctrinally they knew but little about Him; and, as to their worldly interests, they gained nothing by remaining with Him; and yet they clung to Him.

It cannot be said that they availed themselves of His power to work miracles. Indeed, they rather questioned it than used it. And we have reason to judge that, ordinarily, He would not have exercised that power for them. And yet there they were with Him; and for His sake had left their place and kindred on the earth.

What influence His *person* must have had with souls drawn of the Father!

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And this influence, this attractiveness, were alike felt by men of very opposite temperaments. The slow-hearted, reasoning Thomas, and the ardent, uncalculating Peter, were together kept near and around Him.

May we not healthfully dwell on these samples of His nearness to us, and of His preciousness to hearts like our own; and accept them, too, as pledges of what remains for us all, when, gathered out of every clime and colour and character, from every phase of the human family, we shall be with Him for ever?

We need to know Him *personally* better than we do. It was this knowledge the apostles, in those days of the Gospels, had of Him. It was the force and authority of such knowledge their souls felt. And we need more of it.

We may be busy in acquainting ourselves with truths about Him, and we may make proficiency that way; but with all our knowledge and all the disciples' ignorance, they may leave us far behind in the power of a commanding affection toward Himself.

And I will not refuse to say that it is well, when the heart is drawn by Him, beyond the knowledge we have of Him (*I mean knowledge in a doctrinal form*) may account for. There are simple souls that exhibit this; but generally it is otherwise.

"The prerogative of our Christian faith," says one (and his words are good and season-

able), "the secret of its strength is this: that all which it has, and all which it offers, is laid up in a *Person*. This is what has made it strong, while so much else has proved weak. It has not merely deliverance, but a Deliverer; not redemption only, but a Redeemer as well. This is what makes it sunlight, and all else, when compared with it, as moonlight; fair it may be, but cold and ineffectual; while here the life and the light are one.

"And oh, how great the difference between submitting ourselves to a complex code of rules, and casting ourselves upon a beating heart; between accepting a system, and cleaving to a Person! Our blessedness (and let us not miss it), is this: that our treasures are treasured in a Person who is not for one generation a present Teacher and a living Lord, and then for all succeeding generations a past and a dead One, but who is present and living for all."

Yes, indeed; and this ever-present and living One, in the Gospels, is constantly Himself either seen or heard. He is the Teacher or the Doer on every occasion; and the Evangelists have little or nothing left for them [to say] in the way of explanation or comment. And this gives to their narratives simplicity and palpable truthfulness, a truthfulness that may be felt.

Personal Intercourse with the Lord Jesus.

I.

READ I KINGS X. 6-13.

THERE is surely a greater than Solomon here. Exalted to the throne by Israel's God, he cannot fail to call Him to our remembrance who is enthroned in perpetuity at the right hand of the Majesty on high; not now in humiliation and rejection, but in the place of honour and glory, and ere long to be manifested to the world in kingly righteousness when He takes to Himself His great power, and reigns.

At present it will suffice to contemplate this instructive scene as illustrating the deep reality and importance of our having personal dealing with Him, by faith, who is enthroned and hid inside the veil, instead of *only* thinking of safety from coming judgment, to which His finished work on Calvary, through grace, entitles us.

Blessed as it is ever to remember Him, and His unutterable love and sorrow for us upon the cross, yet it is on the Father's throne He is now known to faith, and from thence His blessings flow to every member of His body. It is there now that we have to do with Him, and can say with the apostle, " We see Jesus."

It was when the Queen of Sheba had had personal intercourse with Solomon that she was enabled to form a proper estimate of his surroundings, a most important point to notice; and it serves to teach us the necessity of our having personal intercourse and acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, in order to have a true apprehension of His things.

There are many children of God who know forgiveness of sins, yet have great perplexity and confusion in their minds as to the truth of the Church, the Lord's Table, ministry, etc., and have also many other questions of heart and conscience unsettled, because they have never sought the Lord about them, to be taught by His Spirit according to the wisdom of His unerring word. Assuming that those who read this have present peace with God, and know what it is to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, we shall try to gather up from this divine illustration some lessons of instruction as to the value and blessedness of personal intercourse with the Lord Jesus.

The Gentile queen had *heard* of Solomon, and that he was enthroned by Israel's God. His fame had reached the ends of the earth; and she *believed the report*. Her *heart* was in this way attracted to him. It was not Solomon's *things* that now engaged her, but Solomon *himself*. It was he whom she longed to have to do with; for nothing less than himself

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could satisfy her heart. She therefore allowed no difficulties to stop her progress. From the uttermost parts of the earth she determined to find out Solomon. She had *heard, believed, acted*, and could not rest till she found herself in *the presence of Jehovah's king*.

And surely there is all the difference between believing in the value of the *work* of Christ accomplished on the cross, and (because of the wondrous love told out there), going in faith to the throne of God, and having to do with the ever-living, ever-loving *Person* who did the work.

No doubt it is a turning-point in the history of every believer when he has thus to do with the Son of God *Himself*. He then has a changeless, all-sufficient Object for his heart. He finds it a distinct reality to be occupied with Him who was dead, and is alive again, and that for evermore. He contemplates Him as a risen, glorified Man, exalted to the throne of God; and is assured that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth. He knows Him in whom the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells, not only as Head over all to the Church, which is His body, but as Head of all principality and power, and yet "a Brother born for adversity," "a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," our "Advocate," "High Priest," and "Shepherd."

When this woman of faith found herself in the presence of him whom God had enthroned, what do we find was her first request? It was that he would solve the insuperable difficulties which perplexed her mind, which she knew no one else could do. "She came to prove him with hard questions" (v. 1).

And have not most believers their "hard questions"? Do not many run from one preacher to another, and diligently search ponderous volumes of theology in order to get their minds cleared; and alas! often with the most unsatisfactory results? Year after year the minds of many are clouded and perplexed; whereas if they brought their "hard questions" to the Lord, they would often find a speedy solution of their difficulties. The truth is, that being consciously the Lord's, it becomes the natural and healthy exercise to "make our requests known unto Him," "casting all our care upon Him who careth for us." Nor should we expect our "hard questions" to be answered if we forsake Him, and rely on other sources of help and deliverance.

Who among us that has truly learned the unimprovable character of "that which is born of the flesh" has not found it a hard question to solve, why it is that we, whom Scripture speaks of as "not in the flesh," should not only painfully realize its workings *within*, but

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every now and then, to our deep humiliation and sorrow, find it *come out* in grievous failure and sin?

The difficult question is that one who is taught by Scripture that he is "not in the flesh" should be so often groaning over such fleshly workings. It is an enigma that has puzzled many dear souls; but the Lord can make it clear to those who bring it in the spirit of inquiry to Him. By the light of divine truth, such learn that as to *standing* we are not now viewed by God as in Adam, but as in Christ; that in the death of Christ our old man was crucified, and in Christ risen God has given to us life eternal, a new nature. Thus we are not now "in Adam"; we are "not in the flesh," but "in Christ Jesus," always complete and accepted in Him, though actually carrying about the flesh in us (in which no good is), and finding its workings active. Our power over it is remembering that it has been "crucified with Christ." We are therefore enjoined to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As to *standing*, then, we have passed from death unto life; we are "in Christ Jesus."

As to *fact*, the flesh in us is irremediably bad: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

As to our *state*, though the flesh is in us, it need not hinder our communion with the Lord,

for "we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

As to *power*, through the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, we are to find all our strength and blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is because the flesh is in us, that after being told that we have died, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we are enjoined to "put off all these : anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth," etc. (Col. iii.). Thus all becomes simple when we have the Lord's mind about it; but it is extremely doubtful whether any exercised soul ever finds this "hard question" answered to his satisfaction except through personal intercourse with the Lord Himself over His blessed word.

The world is not now an *adequate* witness of God's government. On great occasions it may be sometimes seen; and, indeed, if we have eyes, in small. At the Flood it was; and, at the destruction of Jerusalem, Israel was made to taste it. But, even now, God has the upper hand, and makes everything work together for good to them that love Him (Rom. viii. 28).

Christian Life in Relation to the Coming of the Lord.

(Concluded).

IF the bride has got the sense of being the bride of Christ, she must desire to be with the Bridegroom; there is not proper love to Christ unless she wants to be with Him. Abram said of his wife, "She is my sister"; then the Egyptians (the world) took her into their house.

I just add that you get here the whole circle of the Church's affections. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come." That is, the Christian who has heard the word of his salvation joins in the cry.

Then those who thirst for some living water are called to come. The saints of the Church can say, though they have not yet the Bridegroom in glory, that they have the living water, and so call, "Let him that is athirst, come," and then address the call universally, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii.).

This they have, though not the Bridegroom.

What I find then is, that in the word of God the thoughts and feelings and conduct and doings and affections of Christians are

identified with the coming of Christ. Take all these things, and you will find that they are all identified with the coming of the Lord.

Take the First Epistle of John, chapter iii., "Behold, what manner of love." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

Beloved friends, we are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." This is what God has purposed for us. When are we to be like Christ in the glory? When He comes. It is not when a person dies, and the spirit goes to be with Christ; for then he is like Christ when Christ was in the grave; and I do not want to be like Christ when Christ was in the grave. But if I die, I shall be like Christ as to that; but this is not what I want, though blessed in itself. I want to be like Him in the glory. When will that be? When He comes He will change our vile bodies, and fashion them like to His glorious body; so here it does not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear we shall be like Him.

Now mark the practical consequences upon the man that has been in his faith brought up to God's purposes. "He that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." I know I am going to be perfectly like

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Christ in the glory, therefore I want to be as like Him as possible down here.

You find here again what the Holy Scriptures are explicit in teaching, that holiness also is always referred to conformity to Christ in glory. I shall have that likeness to Christ in glory, and nothing else is my standard. You will find one passage already quoted, "To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

The perfection of the Christian is to be like Him when He comes.

What again I find as to Christians in 1 Cor. xv. is, "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory." We have the blessed assurance that accompanies true, assured hope of the first resurrection and its results.

We shall be perfectly like Christ when we are raised from the dead. We give an account of ourselves, but it is when we are like the Person to whom we are to give an account. The full efficacy of His first coming has been lost, and therefore people are not comfortable when thinking of His second coming. But for the saint "Christ is the first-fruits, then they that are Christ's at His coming."

Is Christ the first-fruits of the wicked? Surely not. Just as Christ's resurrection was the public testimony of God's approval of

Himself and His work, the resurrection of the saints will be a testimony of God's approval of them as in Him. As we find in Luke xx. 35, 36, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more; but are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

Could anybody show me a single passage about a general resurrection? There is no such thought in Scripture. You get the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew quoted for it, that the goats and sheep represent the two classes; but He has come in His glory down here. He is not sitting on the great white throne: before this heaven and earth flee away. Here He is come, and sits on His throne.

When He does come, and sits there, He gathers all the Gentiles (the nations) to judge them. It is the judgment of the quick or the living. You have three sets of people, not two; and you have nothing of resurrection. You have sheep, goats, and brethren (Matt. xxv. 40).

So far from its being a general resurrection, there is no reference to resurrection at all; it is quite a different subject. Further, the only question is, How have they treated

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His brethren? The ground of judgment does not apply to ninety-nine out of a hundred of those who are to be judged, if it were a general judgment. Those that have had the testimony of the kingdom before He comes to judge the quick will be treated according as they have received God's messengers, but such only are in judgment.

And now the point I return to is, that the coming of the Lord influences and forms the whole life of the Christian. You cannot separate anything in the whole course and ways of the Christian from the coming of the Lord Jesus; and there is but the first coming, and the second coming. He has appeared once in the end of the world; and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time unto salvation. It is true that He comes, and dwells in us; but we speak, with Scripture, of actual coming. If you take holiness, or service, or conversion, or ministry, or a person who has died, they are all connected with Christ's coming. He warns them to be found watching.

I might quote other passages, but I have quoted enough to show that the Lord's coming is connected with everything in the Christian life. When we see Him as He is, then, and then only, shall we be like Him, according to God's purpose. And now I only ask, Are you waiting for God's Son from heaven?

His bearing the sins of many is the only ground of hope for any sinner; that is, the finished work which enables us, through faith, to look for Him when sealed by the Holy Ghost. Then, I say, what am I waiting for? I am waiting for God's Son from heaven. Can you say, "I am watching for Christ"? I do not know when He will come. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." I do not ask you, "Do you understand about the coming of the Lord?" To wait for Him was the thing they were converted to. The thing that woke the virgins up was, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" Are you actually waiting for God's Son from heaven? Would you like Him to come to-night?

Peter explains the delay. He says His long-suffering is salvation, not willing that any should perish. What would you think if He were to come to-night? Would it just be what your soul was looking for?

People think that it would stop the gospel to be waiting for God's Son from heaven. Did the acceptance of God's testimony about the Deluge stop the preaching of Noah? Far from hindering, it was what gave edge to all. May the Lord give us to be ready; when He comes, found watching for Him.

Mixed Principles.

THERE is nothing more damaging to the cause of Christ, or to the souls of His people, than association with men of *mixed* principles. It is very much more dangerous than having to do with open and avowed enemies.

Satan knows this well, and hence his constant effort to lead the Lord's people to link themselves with those who are only half-and-half; or, on the other hand, to introduce spurious materials, false professors, into the midst of those who are seeking in any measure to pursue a path of separation from the world.

We have repeated allusions to this special character of evil in the New Testament. We have it both prophetically in the Gospels and historically in the Acts and in the Epistles.

Thus we have the tares and the leaven in Matthew xiii.

Then, in the Acts, we find persons attaching themselves to the Assembly who were like the mixed multitude of Numbers xi.

And, finally, we have apostolic reference to spurious materials introduced by the enemy for the purpose of corrupting the testimony and subverting the souls of God's people. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of "false brethren unawares brought in" (Gal. ii. 4);

and Jude also speaks of "certain men crept in unawares."

From all this we learn the urgent need of vigilance on the part of the people of God; and not only of vigilance, but also of absolute dependence upon the Lord, who alone can preserve them from the entrance in of false materials, and keep them free from all contact with men of mixed principles and doubtful character.

"The mixed multitude" is sure to "fall a lusting"; and the people of God are in imminent danger of being drawn away from their proper simplicity, and of growing weary of the heavenly manna, their proper food for the wilderness. What is needed is plain decision for Christ, thorough devotedness to Him and His cause.

Where a company of believers are enabled to go on in whole-heartedness for Christ, and in marked separation from this present world, there is not so much danger of persons of equivocal character seeking a place among them, though doubtless Satan will always seek to mar the testimony by the introduction of hypocrites. Such persons do obtain an entrance, and then by their evil ways bring reproach on the Lord's name.

Satan knew full well what he was doing when he led the mixed multitude to attach themselves to the congregation of Israel. It

was not all at once that the effect of this mixture was made manifest. The people had come forth with a high hand; they had passed through the Red Sea, and raised the song of victory on its banks. All looked bright and promising; but the mixed multitude were there, notwithstanding, and the effect of their presence was very speedily made apparent.

Thus it is ever in the history of God's people. We may notice in those great spiritual movements which have taken place from age to age certain elements of decay, which at the first were hidden from view by the flowing tide of grace and energy; but when that tide began to ebb then those elements made their appearance.

This is very serious, and calls for much holy watchfulness. It applies to individuals just as forcibly as to the people of God collectively. In our early moments, our young days, when zeal and freshness characterized us, the spring-tide of grace rose so blessedly that many things were allowed to escape unjudged, which were in reality seeds flung into the ground by the enemy's hand, and which, in due season, are sure to germinate and fructify.

Hence it follows that both assemblies of Christians and individual Christians should ever be on the watch-tower, ever keeping jealous guard lest the enemy gain an advantage in this matter.

Where the heart is true to Christ all is sure to come right in the end. Our God is so gracious, He takes care of us, and preserves us from a thousand snares. May we learn to trust Him and to praise Him.

Sanctification.

THE sanctification of the saints is of a very peculiar order. I read of the Lord saying, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth" (John xvii.).

This is full of meaning. He was separating Himself altogether from the world. He was leaving the earth for heaven. In that sense He was sanctifying Himself. He had always been "holy," even in the mother's womb "that holy thing," as holy then as He now is holy in the highest heaven. But when He said, "I sanctify Myself," He meant that He was about to take a new relationship to us, about to sit in heaven, and draw His saints *there* to Himself.

And this constitutes the high and peculiar order of the saints' sanctification.

I ask, then, Can the saints help the world in its purposes and expectations? Can the saints join in schemes that set the advancement, and the beauty, and the cultivation of the world as their *end* and *hope*? How is that

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possible? How could that be consistent with their peculiar sanctification?

The saint is to labour in the earth for daily bread. He is to learn honest trades for necessary uses. He is to befriend others in their need, do good, as he is able, to all, and to be ready to every good work. But how can he purpose to cultivate and advance the world? or join in the expectations of those who make the world's desirableness and beauty their object?

Christians may be holy in their behaviour, and in their personal habits, and in the moral order and keeping of their thoughts and words; and without watchfulness in such matters we cannot be right. But Christians are not sanctified with *that peculiar sanctification that is properly theirs*, and for which Jesus laid Himself out when He said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself," if they are *worldly*, or seek the cultivation and advancement of this present scene of human action.

The law demanded holiness in desires and thoughts. To be sure it did. The rules of society demand rectitude in a thousand given cases. Conscience imperiously exacts moral conduct of us.

Christ not only does all this, but looks for a sanctification in His saints of a high and peculiar order: *separation from the world because HE is in heaven.*

The Lord Jesus in the Gospels.

III.

IN His relationships to the *world* which was around Him, we see Him at once a *Conqueror*, a *Sufferer*, and a *Benefactor*. What moral glories shine in such an assemblage! He overcame the world, refusing all its attractions; He suffered from it, bearing witness against its whole course; He blest it, dispensing the fruit of His grace and power incessantly. Its temptations only made Him a Conqueror, its pollutions and enmities a Sufferer, its miseries only a Benefactor. What a combination!

It is not, however, *only* thus that we see our Lord Jesus in the Gospels. We have His *person*, His *virtues*, and His *ministry* in teaching and in doing; but without His DEATH all to us would be nothing.

In "the place which is called Calvary," or onward to that place from the garden of Gethsemane, we see the great crisis (as we may surely call it) where *all* are engaged in their several characters, and all disposed of, answered or satisfied, exposed, or revealed and glorified, according to their several deserving. What a place, what a moment, presented to us and recorded for us by each of the Evangelists in their different way!

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Man is seen there, taking his place and acting his part, wretched and worthless as he is. He is there in all variety of conditions : in the Jew and in the Gentile, as rude and as cultivated ; in the civil and in the ecclesiastical place, as brought nigh or as left in the distance ; as privileged, I mean, or left to himself. But whatever this variety may be, all are exposed to their shame.

The Gentile Pilate is there, occupying the seat of civil authority. But if we look there for righteousness, it is oppression we find. Pilate bore the sword not merely in vain, but for the punishment of those who did well. He condemned the One whom he owned to be "just," and of whom he had thrice said, "I find no fault in Him"; and the soldiers who served under him shared or exceeded his iniquity.

The Jewish scribes and priests, the ecclesiastical thing of that hour, seek for false witness ; and the multitude who wait on them are one with them, and cry out against the One who had been ministering to their need and sorrow all His days.

Those who passed by, mere travellers along the road, men left in the distance, or as to themselves, revile, venting impotent hatred ; so many Shimeis, as in the day of David. And disciples, a people brought nigh and privileged, betray the common corruption, and take

part in this scene of shame to man, heartlessly forsaking their Lord in the hour of danger, and when He had looked for some to stand by Him.

All is thus worthless. Exposed to all this variety, man is put to shame as in the face of creation, at this crisis, this solemn moment of weighing him and testing him, as for the last time. The woman with her alabaster box of ointment makes no exception. Her faith was of the operation of God; and beautiful as it was to be had in remembrance through the whole world, it is to God's praise, and His alone, through the Spirit.

Satan, as well as men, shows himself in this great crisis. He deceives, and then destroys. He makes his captive his victim, destroying by the very snare by which he had tempted. The bait becomes the hook, as it always does in his hand. The sin we perpetrate loses its charm the moment it is accomplished, and then becomes the worm that dies not. The gold and silver is cankered, and its rust eats the flesh as if it were fire. The thirty pieces of silver do this with Judas, the captive and the victim of Satan.

JESUS is seen here in His virtues and His victories; virtues in all relationships, and victories over all that stood in His way. What patience in bearing with His weak, selfish disciples! What dignity and calmness in

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answering His adversaries! What self-consecration and surrender to the will of His Father! These were His virtues, as we track Him on this path, from His sitting at the table to His expiring on the cross. And then His victories! The Captive is the Conqueror, like the ark in the land of the Philistines. He put away sin, and abolished death.

“His be the Victor’s name
Who fought our fight alone.”

GOD is here, God Himself, and in the highest. He enters the scene, as I may express it, when darkness covers all the land. That was His acceptance of the *offer* of the Lamb, who had said, “Lo, I come.” And such offer being accepted, God could show no mercy. If He made Jesus sin for us, it is unrelieved, unmitigated judgment He had to sustain. The darkness was the expression of this. God was accepting the offer, and dealing with the Victim accordingly, abating nothing of the demands of righteousness.

And then, when the offer has been fulfilled, and the sacrifice rendered, and Jesus has given up His life, when the blood of the Victim has flowed, and all is finished, God by another figure owns the accomplishment of everything, the fulness of the atonement, and the perfection of the reconciliation. The veil of the temple is rent from the top to the bottom.

He that sits on the throne, that judges right, and weighs all claims and their answers, sin and its judgment, peace and its price and its purchase, gives out that wondrous witness of the deep, ineffable satisfaction He took in the deed that was then perfected in "the place which is called Calvary."

What a part for the blessed God Himself to take in this great crisis, this greatest of all solemnities, when everything was taking its place for eternity!

And further still. Angels are here also, and heaven, earth, and hell, sin also, and death, yea, and the world too.

Angels are here witnessing these things, and learning new wonders. Christ is seen of them.

Heaven, earth, and hell are here, waiting on this moment; rocks and graves, the earthquake, and the darkness of the sky, bespeaking this.

Sin and death are disposed of, set aside and overthrown; the rent veil and the empty sepulchre publishing these mysteries.

The world learns its judgment in the sealed stone being rolled away, and the keepers of it forced to take the sentence of death in themselves.

Surely we may call this "THE GREAT CRISIS," the most solemn moment in the history of God's dealings with His creatures. Won-

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drous assemblage of actors and of actings : GOD and JESUS, man and Satan, angels, heaven, earth and hell, sin and death, and the world, all occupy their place, whether of shame, or of defeat, or of judgment, of virtues and of triumphs, of manifestations and of glory.

This is the record of each of the Evangelists in his several way, or according to his own method, under the Spirit. Our speculations can find no place. We have but to take up the lessons which they teach us, lessons for an ascertained and well-understood eternity.

And as I have thus looked a little carefully at the cross, so would I a little further at the empty sepulchre.

Victorious death, or resurrection from the dead, is the great secret. It was intimated in the very first promise; for the word to the serpent in Gen. iii. told of the death of Christ, and then of His victory; that is, of His victory by dying. The bruised One was to be a Bruiser.

Abel's sacrifice, and every sacrifice in either patriarchal or Mosaic times, bespoke death, and virtue in death; victorious, meritorious, expiating death.

Abraham's faith was in the same mystery. It was in the Quickener of the dead. It was the *pattern* faith; for he is called "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. iv. 11).

Among the many voices of the prophets, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, that well-known scripture, announces the same mystery; for it tells of the *glories* of the *bruised* One, and that bespeaks or intimates victorious death.

The Lord, in His teaching, anticipates His death as a victorious One; speaking at times of His resurrection *from* the dead, of His raising up on the third day the temple of His body (John ii.).

The woman who anointed Him for His burial gives us an expression of faith in the same mystery. She believed that He would die, and be buried, but that He would pass through death and the grave as a Conqueror, and by that very process be introduced to His anointing or His glories. She understood the mystery of victorious death, or of resurrection from the dead, on which great fact the gospel hangs.

Therefore it is that the Lord says of her, that wheresoever the *gospel* was preached, her deed, her faith, should be had in remembrance. He made it a *pattern* faith, as Abraham's had been.

Then the Epistles, in their day, abundantly open this same mystery, interpreting the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as being the secret of the gospel.

Thus, all through, the victorious death of Jesus has been set forth. Without this great

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fact redemption could not be; with it redemption could not but be.

Sin and Christ meet, as I may express it, on the plains of death. Sin is death's sting or inflicter; Christ is death's Conqueror or Destroyer. They meet, and for certainty the result is the putting away of sin, and the redemption of its captive.

Resurrection of the dead simply, or the grave giving up the dead that are in it, would not be victory. The dead might be summoned from their graves just to abide judgment, as those not written in the Lamb's book of life will be. It is resurrection FROM the dead that is victorious, and it insures redemption and this great result, that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"; for "the Lord" is Jesus in resurrection, the Purger of sins, and the Abolisher of death (Heb. i. 3; Rom. x. 13).

If God had forgiven all without propitiation, it would have been to show Himself indifferent to sin. If He had simply condemned all sinners, He would not have manifested His love. By the death of Christ righteousness was glorified, perfect love exercised, the immutable truth of God proved. The wages of sin were there; and the divine majesty was maintained in the highest degree.

Personal Intercourse with the Lord Jesus.

II.

ANOTHER example of the “hard questions” which perplex many believers is, why so many of those who are the special objects of God’s favour are called to pass through such grief and humiliation.

Some one has said :

“ Poor and afflicted, Lord, are thine,
Among the great unfit to shine.”

The question is, Why do God’s children, so loved by Him, have such sorrow and affliction ? It has often perplexed many of the faithful, but, waiting upon the Lord, He can make this clear also.

The fact is, that there are two lines of God’s actings running all through Scripture : His grace and His government. Look at one of these lines at a time, it becomes very plain, but try to harmonize the two, and you cannot ; but He who is infinite can, and does. He is good, and does good ; but His ways are past finding out. Yet He works all things after the counsel of His own will, and all things together for our good. In His *grace* He has saved us, and for ever blessed us ; in His *government* He makes no mistakes, and rules

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us because He loves us. Neither His ways in grace nor His governmental doings ever compromise each other.

It is because we are redeemed that we are objects of His care and discipline who is the Father of spirits, and He perfectly knows our hearts. Why one child of God is blessed and exalted in temporal matters, and another distressed with reverses, is often inscrutable to us; but we may be assured that all is ordered for the best by Him whose we are. Yet while we have often to acknowledge that His *governmental dealings* are past finding out, it is our happy privilege as objects of *divine grace* to stand fast in the liberty in which He has set us, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Then if the choicest objects fail, friends forsake us, our fondest expectations are smashed before our eyes, and the tenderest ties of earth snapped, we can still rest in His grace, assured that all is needed for our good. As we sometimes sing,

“ Earthly friends may fail or leave us,
One day soothe, the next day grieve us,
But this Friend will ne’er deceive us :
Oh, how He loves ! ”

It is then the Christian’s privilege to stand in the true grace of God, to know under all circumstances the Lord Jesus Christ as his resource as well as refuge, and to bring all his

“hard questions” to Him who alone can solve them to his heart’s comfort and satisfaction.

The next thing to notice in this Gentile’s intercourse with Solomon is, that “she communed with him of ALL that was in her heart”; and we are informed that “Solomon told her ALL her questions; there was not anything hid from the king which he told her not” (vv. 2-3).

She found the king’s presence so attractive and inviting to her heart’s confidence that she felt it a privilege to unburden ALL her heart to him (1 Kings x.).

Thus this divinely drawn picture reads us another striking lesson, for who that has ever tasted the blessedness of personal intercourse with the Lord Jesus has not been constrained to pour out his heart before Him whose grace and wisdom warrant the fullest confidence?

It is when consciously inside the veil, in the presence of Him who is our life and righteousness, where His blood ever speaks, that we can tell out to Him what we could mention to no one else. His power to usward being almighty, His love perfect, His wisdom infinite, and His character unchanging, He not only commands our confidence, but warrants the largest expectations of our hearts.

All this time the believing Gentile is taken up with Solomon, not his doings or surroundings, but with himself, and his “wisdom” struck her much. Grace surely it was to admit

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her into the presence of him whom the God of Israel had enthroned; but, when there, his wisdom greatly astonished her.

And so with us. Though at first we learn the grace of God giving us liberty to be in His presence, it is afterwards that we learn Christ as "the wisdom of God." His wonderful wisdom, not only in destroying death by dying, and in overcoming Satan, who had the power of death, through going into death Himself, but also in now, while enthroned on high, managing everything for us as regards our souls, bodies, and circumstances, both individually and collectively; so that every sheep and lamb of the flock is fed, kept, restored, delivered, and cared for, and with such minuteness that the hairs of our head are all numbered.

In this way, as well as in upholding all things, and working all things after the counsel of His own will, the Lord's wondrous wisdom strikes us as much as His marvellous grace did at the first. Oh, the vast blessedness to our souls in thus learning Christ by personal intercourse with Himself! How a true sense of what He is fills us with wonder as well as with praise! Well might an apostle cry out, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33).

The Queen of Sheba, thus realizing the blessedness of being in Solomon's presence, and delighted and satisfied with personal acquaintance with him, now naturally, as it were, turns to his surroundings.

"The HOUSE which he had built" first arrested her attention. And so with us, when we really enjoy the Lord, and are taken up with His moral excellencies, then His official glories engage our interest. If one believer is accepted in Him, and united to Him by the Holy Ghost, then it follows that other believers must be also united to Him, and He must be therefore the Head of a body; which is really the case. This is the Church or Assembly which He is now building, "a spiritual house." He said to Peter, "Upon this rock *I will* build My Church," or Assembly (Matt. xvi.). He had not then begun to build it. It was yet future: "*I will* build"; and the building we know was begun by the Holy Ghost coming down at Pentecost, and baptizing all believers into one body (1 Cor. xii. 13).

This building has been going on ever since. The Lord has been building His Assembly, notwithstanding all our sin and failure as to our responsibility; and He will continue to build until it be completed, and He comes from heaven to receive us unto Himself.

If the Queen of Sheba was so astonished at

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the house which Solomon had built, which, though so magnificent, was corruptible and fading, how much more is the believer charmed with the divine idea of the Church of God! Unique in its character, the finest workmanship of His Spirit, heavenly in its calling and destiny, wrought according to the Father's eternal purpose and grace in Christ, in which, by the Holy Ghost, believing Jews and Gentiles are incorporated together, one body energized by one Spirit, to the praise of His glory.

"The meat of his TABLE" also arrested her attention. And still using this divine narrative as an illustration, it is remarkable how often, when souls have been brought to enjoy intercourse with the Lord, and have become acquainted with His own mind about His Assembly, they discover that the Lord has a TABLE here.

We read (though but once) in Scripture of *the Lord's Table*, and then its notice, though brief, is comprehensive, so that we are not left to our own conjectures about it. One characteristic of it is the communion of saints, a communion founded, not on experience or special membership, but on the blood of Christ. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16).

Another characteristic of the Lord's Table

is the expression of "one body" as the "one loaf" on the table sets forth. Each believer partaking of the same loaf not only feeds on Christ, but all doing it expresses that those who thus eat set forth the membership of one body. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we being many are one bread, one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread (or loaf)" (1 Cor. x. 17).

. But it was "the MEAT of his table" that also arrested the attention of the Gentile queen; and those who now enter into the spiritual character of the Lord's Table cannot but discern that it is furnished with the choicest meat that God could supply. The bread and the cup which to faith set forth the flesh and blood of the Lord are above all price. Thus the Lord's Table is not only the highest place of dignity and blessing that can be known on earth, but the richest and best "meat" which heaven could bestow is there provided for our delight and joy.

The multitude of servants as well as their varied ministries also attracted her attention: "the sitting of his servants, the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers" (v. 5). And so now the multitude of the Lord's servants, and the vast variety of their ministry, open subjects of the deepest interest to those who are taught to view

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spiritual matters in connection with the Lord Himself. He also has ascended into the heavens, has received gifts for men, and all His servants are under His guidance and control. Their diversity is as great as are the members of the human body (see 1 Cor. xii. 12). Each member is needed, each contributes to the welfare of the whole body, and no member is able to supply the place of another.

Very different indeed is the Lord's present order of ministry from the Aaronic functions of priests and Levites of a former dispensation, when God was dealing with an earthly nation; for now His people are spiritual, called with a heavenly calling, and united to Christ in the heavens as Head of one body. All this, in its vast variety and marvellous practical activity, becomes plain enough to those who know what personal intercourse with the Lord is, and who hearken to His instruction.

When she viewed also "his ASCENT by which he went up unto the house of the Lord," we are told that she was quite overcome, "there was no more spirit in her" (v. 5); which may serve to remind us that the climax of our blessings is only reached in the ascension of our blessed Lord. It was in ascension that God gave Him to be Head over all to the Church; and in ascension He received gifts for men, and sent down the Holy Ghost. And the way by which He went up, triumphing

over principalities and powers, leading captivity captive, to take His rightful place on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, not only tells us of power and victory, but sets our souls at liberty and rest for ever.

Our blessings then, while founded upon the blood of the cross, are secured in an ascended Christ, from whom the whole body is nourished and edified. It is scarcely to be wondered at that the Gentile queen should have said that Solomon's wisdom and prosperity exceeded the fame which she had heard. And so we find that the more personal intercourse we have with the Lord the more we really find that He exceeds all we had ever thought or heard of Him.

Among other blessed lessons which she learned, however, by this intercourse, was that the true secret of happiness was being continually in his presence, and under his instruction. And surely no believer can be really happy apart from the Lord. Communion with Him, entering into His thoughts, and joy, and rest, is surely our only source of present blessing. To be consciously in the Lord's presence, and "continually" there, garrisoned by His love, having all our springs in Him, and hearkening to His word, is certainly the true secret of Christian happiness; for

"Far from Thee we faint and languish;
Oh! our Saviour, keep us nigh."

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“ Happy,” said she, “ are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom ” (v. 8).

But all Christians, though saved, are not happy. Those, for instance, who do not hearken to the Lord’s wisdom, who *refuse the path of obedience*, cannot be happy, for they grieve the Holy Spirit, and walk in paths where the Lord cannot vouchsafe His presence.

Then, again, there are those who are so constantly *occupied with circumstances*, and burdening themselves with earthly cares, as to make themselves very unhappy, because circumstances are their object instead of Christ; and they measure God’s love to them according to prosperity in earthly things; which is unbelieving and delusive.

But perhaps the most miserable being is a *self-occupied* person, who is every now and then either lifted up with pride or plunged into despondency. Having self for his object (good self, bad self, or religious self), he cannot rise above self, and is thus practically severed from the Lord, the only source of joy. On this account he is not only miserable himself, but he makes every one miserable with whom he comes in contact; for self-occupation is a more catching malady than many suppose. To ponder our circumstances, and consider our ways and state of *soul*, may be needful to guide us in prayer or self-judgment; but to

allow either circumstances or self to come in so as to displace Christ from our hearts as our true Object is not the way of faith, and it wars terribly against the soul.

Let us never forget, then, that the secret of happiness is being "continually" before the Lord, and hearkening to His wisdom.

Another blessed effect of this woman's intercourse with Solomon was, that her heart was drawn out in devotedness. Like one who broke the alabaster box, and poured the precious ointment on the head of Jesus, she considered nothing too much or too costly to render to the king. We are told that "*she gave to him an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices a very great store, and precious stones*" (v. 10).

She had received largely from him, and now her heart's delight was in some small degree to return his love. Thus "the love of Christ constrains us." "We love Him, because He first loved us"; and the claims of love are powerful, specially of such love. Who can fathom it, much less render again adequately for it? Surely when we are in the joyful sense of His love, admiring and adoring Him, the heart is ready to cry out,

"Yea, though I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call;
I love my Lord with such a love
That I could give Him all."

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We must not fail to notice the king's abundant goodness to her. We read that "King Solomon gave unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty" (v. 13).

This strikingly reminds us of the double character of blessing with which our adorable Lord loads us; first, in washing us from our sins in His own blood, and taking us into fellowship with Himself, according to His royal bounty; and secondly, in giving us the desire of our hearts according to His own words: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7).

Wondrous favour and blessing, especially to such far-off Gentiles as we were! It is thus knowing Christ from personal intercourse with Himself that our hearts are both satisfied and happy. And when this is the case, as it was said of this royal visitor, it may be said of us, "So she went to her own country, she and her servants"; that is, she went under such a sense of Solomon's goodness, wisdom, and favour to her that she could not but testify of him wherever she went.

And can we be silent, and not seek to spread the precious savour of His name, if we know the satisfaction and joy of personal intercourse with the Lord Himself?

The Difference between Holding the Truth of the One Body and Keeping the Spirit's Unity.

EPHESIANS IV. 3, 4.

EVERY child of God, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, is a member of the "one body," which is formed by "one Spirit."

The body cannot be broken or divided, for it is formed by divine power; but the manifestation of the one body and one Spirit has utterly failed; hence the present confusion in Christendom.

We are enjoined to practically act out the membership of "one body"; and the activity of "one Spirit" leads to it: but we are never told to keep the unity of the body, but "the unity of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the *power* for everything that is according to God; and He orders through the Word everything as to our private walk, and as to our collective action on assembly ground.

If THE LORD speaks to His assemblies, He bids us "hear what the Spirit saith"; and as there is one Spirit, and He dwells in the assembly on earth, He bids every individual to hear what the Spirit saith to every assembly. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the

Spirit saith to the assemblies " (Rev. ii., iii.). The Lord therefore calls on every member of the " one body " to hear what He saith about every assembly.

If every member of the " one body " heard therefore what the Spirit saith unto the assemblies, and acted on it, the Spirit's unity would be kept. But all members of the " one body " do not hear, and, it may be, do not care to hear, what the Spirit saith. Is it not clear, then, that those who do hear *must act* in faithfulness to the Lord, and, however sorrowfully, separate from those who do not hear what the Spirit saith? For we are commanded to *keep the Spirit's unity* in the bond of peace. How else could it be kept?

An evil of a character hitherto unknown might break out in some part of the world among those who, in these last days, are gathered on the ground of God's assembly.

What should the faithful do?

It (the evil) may be in a place a thousand miles off, or more; but can we be indifferent to it?

Impossible, if we believe in " one Spirit " dwelling in the Church or Assembly. Would not such at once make the Lord their refuge, and turn to " the word of His grace " ? (Acts xx. 32). Does not the Spirit lead true hearts in this way? Well, the Lord saith, " Hear what the Spirit saith."

And such would soon find that the Spirit exposes and rebukes it as unholy, *as contrary to the truth*, and unsuited to Him who is the Holy and the True. Those who look only to men must go wrong; those only can have the Lord's mind who wait on Him, and honour the Holy Ghost.

And, further :

(1) The Spirit's unity must be according to holiness or separation from evil; for He is a HOLY Spirit.

(2) It must be according to the truth (and we know who said, "Thy word is truth"); for *the Spirit is truth*, and He guides into *all the truth* (John xvii. 17; 1 John v. 6; John xvi. 13).

(3) The path of the Spirit must certainly have in view the honour and glory of "the Son"; for Jesus said, "He shall glorify Me" (John xvi. 14). Happy are those who look above men's heads, and amid, it may be, much failure, "hear what the Spirit saith."

(4) Those who oppose the action of the "one Spirit" in any measure, or for any reason, seriously dishonour the Lord, grieve the Holy Spirit whereby they are sealed, damage their own souls, perhaps mislead others, mar the testimony of God, and fall under His rebuke.

May all who read these lines look unto Him who is able to keep us from falling; and may our cry be, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Psa. cxix. 117).

Life and Power.

IF you say, "I have life from God, and therefore I have got power," it is not true; but if you say, I have got life from God, but I have got the temptations of Satan and the world, and all that can seduce me away from the range and exercise of this life, and you say, "Father, keep me, I want to be kept," then there will be power.

When Paul gets into the third heaven, what is the effect?

When there the flesh is not puffed up; for he is there to hear things which he cannot even utter down here. But when he comes down the flesh would use it to say that no one had ever been in the third heaven but himself.

He must get that broken down; therefore the thorn is sent, which brings the consciousness of weakness where boasting had been before.

We are never in danger in the presence of God; but when we are thinking of having been there, danger is there. The thorn gives conscious weakness to the man himself. In Paul's case we know it was something that made his preaching contemptible.

The Lord has to put us down in every way. The danger of the Christian is, that he is not consciously weak, that the flesh is not put in its place, that he thinks he can do something;

but when the flesh is put down, where it had pretended to be something, then the believer can say, "When I am weak, then am I strong"; and Christ is exalted. For when Paul, with all this incompetency, was the means of such blessing to others, it is quite clear that it was Christ, and not Paul, that was the strength.

This is the truth that is brought out before us in 2 Cor. xii.; Christ's perfect righteousness and glory, which is ours, or *the man in Christ*; and then the man made nothing of, and *Christ in him* everything.

There is where we get the Christian complete. In both cases it is Paul; but in the one it is the man in Christ, and in the other it is Christ in the man, and the man thus made nothing of.

That which the believer has on earth is not only this place in Christ in heaven, but the power of Christ in this world. While we certainly shall have the experience of what we are, at the same time the Scripture shows us always, as such, no necessity in this world for being anything else but *Christ*. "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21).

The fact that the flesh is in me is no reason that I am to walk after it.

The power is not in the fact that we have the life, but in exercised dependence upon the life that we have got in Christ.

Who are Christ's Sheep?

“ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand ” (John x. 27, 28).

THERE were *religious* people all around, but were they Christ's sheep?

This was the all-important question.

There was “ the hireling ” too, and “ the thief,” “ the stranger ” and “ the wolf ”; but oh, how different from the Good Shepherd!

We cannot forget that there are still many sheep round about us who are very dear to the heart of Jesus. He calls them “ His own sheep ” (v. 3). They belong to Him. He loved them, and gave Himself for them. He said, “ The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep ” (v. 11).

1. One characteristic of Christ's sheep is, that **THEY HEAR HIS VOICE**. No matter who may be the instrument, the question with them is, Is it *Christ's* voice? What is *He* saying? This is one mark of the sheep of Christ from first to last. “ They know not the voice of strangers ” (v. 5), but the Shepherd's voice they well know. It is Jesus they love to hear.

When the apostle Paul went to Thessalonica, they received his testimony because it was God's truth. They were not taken up

with the servant, but with the message that he brought. They owned it to be GOD'S testimony. In it they heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. They did not receive the testimony as Paul's opinions; for it came to them, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance"; they therefore "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, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i.).

When Paul went to the polished citizens of Corinth, he purposely sought to preach in simple language; and though he was a learned man, he laid aside eloquent and enticing words of man's wisdom, lest the people should hear only Paul's voice, and not receive GOD'S testimony, and thus their faith stand in the wisdom of men, instead of the power of God. Thus they heard and received God's truth about the Lord Jesus; they heard the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd through Paul.

The question is, What is the Lord Jesus, who is seated on the right hand of God in the heavens, saying now? If He were now to speak in an audible voice, would it not be, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *heareth My word*, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life"? (John v. 24).

Surely this is His testimony. See, then, that you refuse not His voice who speaketh from heaven. The believer looks up to heaven, beholds the face of Jesus by faith, hearkens to His word, and receives His testimony. Christ's sheep hear His voice.

Many know the way of salvation, but have not received Christ as their Saviour. They do not hear His voice in the gospel. "Ye believe not," said Jesus, "because ye are not of My sheep" (v. 26).

2. In the next place, CHRIST KNOWS HIS SHEEP. True it is that He knows all things; but He peculiarly knows His own. The acquaintance is mutual. They know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, and He knows them (John xvii. 3). "He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum i. 7).

Many a professor will come in that day, saying, "We have prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name done many wonderful works"; but Jesus will say unto them, "I never knew you: depart from Me."

They never had any acquaintance with Christ; had no *personal* dealing with Him. Have you, dear friends, known this personal intimacy with Jesus? Have you known what it is to be *reconciled* to God through the death of His Son? Those who know Christ, however feebly, do not hesitate to cast themselves

into His open arms; and such always prove Him to be a Friend that loveth at all times, a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

3. Another feature in Christ's sheep is, that having heard His voice, and being assured that Christ knows them, it leads to practical action, **THEY FOLLOW CHRIST**. This is not following rules, creeds, ordinances, however true in themselves they may be, but Christ. It is not following men, however godly they may be, further than they are following Christ. This Satan hates, and tries to hinder. He would sometimes use even Christian people, who may be in a bad state of soul, to hinder others from *wholly* following the Lord. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. We are kept here for no other object than to follow Christ; not to follow our own inclinations, nor to follow other saints, but to follow Christ. This marks Christ's sheep. Jesus said, "They follow Me."

Do we know what this is? Are we searching the Scriptures to find out His steps, that we may follow Him? Are we, through honour and dishonour, seeking only to please Him? Are we aiming to be "meek and lowly in heart" as He was? to take His yoke upon us, and learn of Him? We are told that Christ's sheep are thus exercised; they follow Christ. It does not say they ought to do so,

but that they do follow Christ. This shows them to be Christ's sheep.

Now, mark the security of Christ's sheep.

1. **THEY HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.** "I give unto them *eternal* life." This is His gift. It is in no way earned or deserved. No. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Eternal life, then, comes to us in the way of gift. Christ does not give less. It is not life for a day or a year, but for ever—eternal life. Your life is hid with Christ in God. Christ is our life. Christ is the Giver, the sinner the receiver. My dear reader, have you really received this gift of God? Have you *eternal* life? I trust you will not rest for a moment, till you are certain that you have eternal life. Oh, you must have eternal life, or you will be in everlasting burnings! "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36).

2. **"THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH."** What perfect rest and peace this gives the soul; for He is faithful that promised; He cannot deny Himself. David's fear and distress were not a little that he would one day perish by the hand of Saul; but the true believer need have no misgiving as to the eternal future. He who is almighty in power and perfect in love says,

"They shall never perish." Observe, it is absolute and unconditional: "They shall never perish." Dear trembling believer, you cannot be lost. You are in Christ. You have eternal life, and Christ declares you "shall never perish." He died for you. His blood cleanseth from all sin. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." What more can you need to give you perfect rest of soul?

3. "NEITHER SHALL ANY MAN PLUCK THEM OUT OF MY HAND." The word "man" is in italics. It shows us that no power shall be able to separate us from Christ's keeping.

When He said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," it implied three things: (1) I will receive. (2) I will hold him fast; and (3) I will never give him up, "in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). So here He says, "None shall pluck them out of My hand." What perfect security this gives! Surely it is a threefold cord, that can never be broken. (1) The present possession of "eternal life." (2) The promise of the faithful and Good Shepherd, "They shall never perish." (3) Christ's own almighty hand keeping firmly in its grasp: "None shall pluck them out of My hand."

Many dear children of God do not enter into the joy of these precious realities. They read men's books, and embrace men's opinions, instead of going only to the Scrip-

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tures for God's mind, and resting on His precious words about Jesus, which can never pass away.

“Never Perish.”

“NEVER PERISH!” Words of mercy,
Coming from the lips of One
Who, though here a homeless Stranger,
Fills the high eternal throne;
Brightness of the Father's glory,
God and man in One combined;
Faithful Shepherd of the chosen,
Safe are those to Him assigned.

“NEVER PERISH!” Words of sweetness,
Dissipating every fear;
Filling all with joy and gladness,
Who the Shepherd's voice can hear;
Bringing richest consolation
To the soul fatigued, oppressed;
Sweet refreshment to the fainting,
And to weary spirits rest.

“NEVER PERISH!” Words of power;
Satan now I can defy:
Safe my soul beyond my keeping,
Hid with Christ in God on high.
Come what will, *I'm safe for ever*;
'Tis the promise of my God;
Written in His word unfailing,
Sealed with Christ's own precious blood.

The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

THE resurrection of the Lord Jesus is a GREAT FACT. Whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear, there it is, and cannot be gainsaid. Neither can we escape from its application to ourselves. It has to do with us, with each of us, again I say, whether we will or not.

It has its different virtue, its twofold force and meaning, and each one should know how it addresses itself to him. Still there it is, and none can elude it. Jesus risen and glorified is set above us and before us, as the sun is set in the heavens, and the creation of God has to do with it. And who could pluck the sun out of the sky?

The GLORY seated itself in the cloud as Israel went through the wilderness; and Israel must know it to be there, and have to do with it there, be they in what condition they may.

It may conduct them cheerfully, if they walk obediently; it will rebuke and judge them, if otherwise. But there it is, as over them, and before them; and they cannot elude its application to them, again I say, be they in what condition they may.

So again. Prophets come from God among the people. There they are; and whether the people will hear, or whether they will forbear, they shall know that prophets have been

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among them. They cannot gainsay the fact, or elude its application.

And so again. Christ in the world, in the days of His flesh, was a kindred fact. Satan had to know that as a fact, and as applying to him; and man had his blessing brought to him by it, or his guilt and judgment aggravated. The kingdom of God had come nigh; and of this, and of the force of it, they had to assure themselves.

And just according to all this is the present great fact of the resurrection.

Jesus is risen and exalted. He is ascended and glorified. We might as well try to pluck the sun out of the sky, as try to escape from the application of this great fact to our condition. It speaks of "judgment" and of "mercy," as we either look at the cross of Christ with convicted, interested hearts, or as we despise it and slight it. It has a voice in the ear of all. It speaks, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

There is, however, this distinction to be observed, and it is serious: to enjoy it as God's salvation, we must personally, livingly, by faith, be brought into connection with it NOW. If we slight it all our days, it will bring itself into connection with us BY-AND-BY.

This is, surely I may say, serious. It brings to mind Mark v. In spite of Satan, whether he would or not, the Lord Jesus brings Him-

self into connection with him in the person of the poor Legion of Gadara, in order to judge him, and destroy his work. But He does not put Himself, and the virtue that He carried in Him, into connection with the poor diseased woman in the crowd till she, by faith, had brought herself and her necessity to Him.

This distinction has a deeply serious truth 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 with the *judgment* which will then be with Him. No deprecation will THEN avail; no seeking NOW can but avail.

The sequel is well weighed. It is vain for man, or the world, or the god and prince of it, to resist the risen Christ; it will be found to be but kicking against the pricks: self-destruction.

It is vain for the sinner who trusts in the risen Christ to be doubting; for God has justified him. The righteousness of God is his who pleads redemption and ransom by the blood; the God-glorifying atonement of Jesus. His death was the vindication of God, in full, glorious righteousness. Let God now pardon the vilest (the cross entitles Him so to do), and yet maintain His righteousness and moral glory in all perfectness. Yea, it is the righteousness of God which accepts the sinner who pleads the cross; for as the cross *main-*

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tains God's righteousness, that righteousness is *displayed* in making righteous the sinner who pleads it (Rom. iii.).

And here, I may add, we are ignorant of God; we have not the knowledge of Him, as the apostle speaks (1 Cor. xv. 34), if we do not receive the fact or doctrine of resurrection. It is by that that God, in such a world as this, shows Himself in His proper glory.

The enemy, through sin, has brought in death, and the blessed One is displayed in victory over him; but this is only done by that great transaction which puts away sin, and abolishes death. And resurrection is the witness of that.

The disciples were quite unbelieving as to this great fact, even after it had taken place. They were, at that time, exhibiting some very gracious and earnest affection; but they were betraying full unbelief as to this fact. But this is natural. More readily would we occupy ourselves *for Him* than believe that He has occupied Himself, fought and conquered, suffered and triumphed, *for us*.

With earnest affection the Galilean women visited the sepulchre; with boldness Joseph and Nicodemus claimed the body. It was something more than spices and ointments that embalmed it; it was love and zeal, and earnestness and tears.

Magdalene lingers about the tomb, and

Peter and John go to it as with rival haste. The two on the road to Emmaus, while they talk of Jesus, are sad; and godly kindlings stir in their hearts as their fellow-Traveller makes Him His subject.

All this was *gracious affection*; but with all this they were *unbelieving*. With this occupation of heart *about Him*, they did not receive the great fact of His victory *for them*.

The Lord is not satisfied with this. How could He be? Sinners must know Him in the grace and strength that has met them in their need. The disciples come to the sepulchre diligently and lovingly; but still this will not do. By faith we must see Him coming to us as in our graves, and not think of going to Him in His grave. We are the *dead* ones, and not He; He is the *living* One, and not we.

The Son of God entered this scene of ruin as a Redeemer of the lost, and as a Quickener of the dead. It is *that* which we must know. He was tender, knowing how to appreciate the affection; but He rebuked the unbelief, and stayed not till He carried the light of this great mystery to their hearts and consciences. Then "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy"; thus, in spirit, as I may say, offering their meat-offering and their drink-offering, as on the bringing of "the sheaf of the first-fruits" out of the field, in the beginning of harvest (Lev. xxiii. 9-13).

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Angels, however, were before them in this. They had learnt this mystery; they rejoiced in it; and in their way celebrated it. And we may say with comfort, when we think of this, What an interest is taken in heaven in the things that are transacted on earth! What intimacy of angels with sinners!

“Seen of angels” is part of “the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. iii. 16). The Christ of God is *the Object* with angels, while He is going through His wondrous work and way for sinners. Very blessed this is.

“The sons of God,” the angels, shouted for joy, when earth’s *foundations* were laid (Job xxxviii.); and the Book of the Apocalypse shows them taking their place and part in the great action, when earth’s career is *closing*.

And what were they doing when Jesus was born? And what were they doing when Jesus had died? They are still present. They filled the plains of Bethlehem at the birth, they sit in the empty sepulchre after the resurrection. Is not this intimacy?

It has been beautifully said, “The angels broke bounds *that morning*,” when they appeared in crowds, and with exultation, to the shepherds. True; but they have been always “breaking bounds,” always leaving their native heaven, to interest themselves in the earth. That action in Luke ii. was but one chapter in their history.

Surely this intimacy of heaven with earth, this interest which the creatures of God *there* take in the objects of His grace *here*, tells us of the harmonies which are destined to fill the whole scene by-and-by. God is a God of order. The spheres which He forms and animates will be witnesses of these harmonies; and all will tell of the *skill of the hand* that has disposed them, and of the *love of the bosom* that has linked them.

The Value of the Death of Christ.

IF we examine the value of the death of Christ, what do we find attached to it in Scripture?

Do I need redemption? We have redemption through His blood, an eternal redemption, for "by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 12).

Do I need forgiveness? That redemption which I have through His blood is the forgiveness of sins; yea, "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22).

Do I need peace? He has made peace through the blood of His cross (Col. i. 20).

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Do I need reconciliation with God? Though we were sinners, yet now hath He reconciled us by the body of His flesh through death, to present us holy and unblamable, and unreprouvable in God's sight. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Col. i. 21, 22; Rom. v. 10).

Do I desire to be dead to sin, and have the flesh crucified, with its affections and lusts? "I am crucified with Christ." "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." "For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God" (Rom. vi. 6, 10). This is my deliverance also from the charge and burden of the law, which has dominion over a man as long as he lives.

Do I feel the need of propitiation? Christ is set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood. The need of justification? I am justified by His blood (Rom. iii. 25; v. 9).

Would I have a part with Christ? He must die, for except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; if it die, it brings forth much fruit (John xii. 24).

Hence, unto what am I baptized as the public expression of my faith? As many of us as are baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death (Rom. vi. 3).

What, indeed, has broken down the middle wall of partition; and let in the Gentiles, slay-

ing the enmity, and reconciling Jew and Gentile in one body to God? The cross (Eph. ii. 16).

How have we boldness to enter into the holiest? By the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way, which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh; for till that was rent the Holy Ghost signified by it that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest (Heb. x. 19, 20).

Hence, it was a lifted-up Christ that was the attractive point for all. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John xii. 32).

In the power of what was the great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead? Through the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb. xiii. 20).

How was the curse of the law taken away from those who were under it? By Christ's being made a curse for them; as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (Gal. iii. 13; Rom. x. 4).

How are we washed from our sins? He has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; for His blood cleanseth from all sin (Rev. i. 5; 1 John i. 7).

If I would be delivered from the world, it is by the cross, by which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world (Gal. i. 4; vi. 14).

If the love of Christ constrains me towards

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men in the thought of the terror of the Lord, how is it so? Because I thus judge, if One died for all, then were all dead, and they that live should live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again. Hence the apostle knew no man after the flesh; no, not even Christ. All was a new creation (2 Cor. v. 10-17).

If I would live in divine power, it is always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11).

If He would institute a special remembrance to call Him to mind, it was a broken body and a shed blood. It is not less a Lamb as it were slain that is found in the throne (Luke xxii. 19, 20; Rev. v. 6-14).

All was love, no doubt; but do I want to learn it? Hereby we know it, that He laid down His life for us, and that even of God, in that He loved us, and gave His Son as a propitiation for our sins. It is to the sprinkling of that precious blood of Christ that we are sanctified, and to obedience (1 John iii. 16; iv. 9, 10; 1 Pet. i. 2).

Do I desire, therefore, my conscience purged? It is through the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. ix. 14).

Do I seek the destruction of the power of Satan? It is through death that He destroyed

(the power of) him that had the power of death (Heb. ii. 14).

What do I find to be the central object of Christ's coming, the groundwork of His glory as Man? We see Him made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God might taste death for every man (Heb. ii. 9; ix. 23).

And even the purifying and reconciling of all things in heaven and earth depends on this (Col. i. 20).

Christian Service.

READ NUMBERS XVIII. 1-7.

HERE we have a divine answer to the question raised by the children of Israel, "Shall we be consumed with dying?"

"No," says the God of all grace and mercy.

And why not?

Because Aaron and his sons with him "shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar: that there be *no wrath any more* upon the children of Israel." Thus the people are taught, that in the very priesthood which had been so despised and spoken against they were to find their security.

But we have to notice particularly that

Aaron's sons, and his father's house, are associated with him in his high and holy privileges and responsibilities. The Levites were given as a gift to Aaron, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. They were to serve under Aaron, the head of the priestly house.

This teaches us a fine lesson, and one much needed by Christians at the present moment. We all want to bear in mind that service, to be intelligent and acceptable, must be rendered in subjection to priestly authority and guidance. "And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be *joined unto thee*, and *minister unto thee*."

A distinct character was thus stamped upon the entire range of Levite service. The whole tribe of workers were associated with, and subject to, the high priest. All was under his immediate control and guidance. So it must be now in reference to all God's workers. All Christian service must be rendered in fellowship with our great High Priest, and in holy subjection to His authority. It is of no value otherwise. There may be a great deal of work done, there may be a great deal of activity; but if Christ be not the immediate object before the heart, if His guidance and authority be not fully owned, the work must go for nothing.

But, on the other hand, the smallest act of service, the meanest work done under the eye of Christ, done with direct reference to Him, has its value in God's estimation, and shall most assuredly receive its due reward. This is truly encouraging and consolatory to the heart of every earnest worker. The Levites had to work under Aaron. Christians have to work under Christ. We are responsible to Him. It is very well and very beautiful to walk in fellowship with our dear fellow-workmen, and to be subject one to another in the fear of the Lord. Nothing is further from our thoughts than to foster or countenance a spirit of haughty independence, or that temper of soul which would hinder our genial and hearty co-operation with our brethren in every good work.

All the Levites were "joined unto Aaron" in their work, and therefore they were joined to one another. Hence they had to work together. If a Levite had turned his back upon his brethren, he would have turned his back upon Aaron. We may imagine a Levite taking offence at something or other in the conduct of his fellows, and saying to himself, "I cannot get on with my brethren. I must walk alone. I can serve God, and work under Aaron; but I must keep aloof from my brethren, inasmuch as I find it impossible to agree with them as to the mode of working."

But we can easily see through the fallacy of all this. For a Levite to adopt such a line of action would have produced nothing but confusion. All were called to work together, how varied soever their work might be.

Still, be it ever borne in mind, their work did vary; and, moreover, each was called to work under Aaron. There was individual responsibility with the most harmonious corporate action. We certainly desire in every possible way to promote unity in action; but this must never be suffered to trench upon the domain of personal service, or to interfere with the direct reference of the individual workman to his Lord. The Church of God affords a very extensive platform to the Lord's workers. There is ample space thereon for all sorts of labourers. We must not attempt to reduce all to a dead level, or cramp the varied energies of Christ's servants by confining them to certain old ruts of our own formation. This will never do. We must all of us diligently seek to combine the most cordial unanimity with the greatest possible variety in action. Both will be healthfully promoted by each and all remembering that we are called to serve together under Christ.

Here lies the grand secret: *Together under Christ*. May we bear this in mind. It will help us to recognize and appreciate another's line of work though it may differ from our

own; and, on the other hand, it will preserve us from an overweening sense of our own department of service, inasmuch as we shall see that we are, one and all, but co-workers in the one wide field; and that the great object before the Master's heart can only be attained by each worker pursuing his own special line, and pursuing it in happy fellowship with all.

There is a pernicious tendency in some minds to depreciate every line of work save their own. This must be carefully guarded against. If all were to pursue the same line, where were that lovely variety which characterizes the Lord's work and workmen in the world? Nor is it merely a question of the line of work, but actually of the peculiar style of each workman.

You may find two evangelists, each marked by an intense desire for the salvation of souls, each preaching substantially the same truth, and yet there may be the greatest possible variety in the mode in which each one seeks to gain the selfsame object. We should be prepared for this; indeed, we should fully expect it.

And the same holds good in reference to every other branch of Christian service. We should strongly suspect the ground occupied by a Christian assembly if there were not ample space allowed for every branch and style of Christian service; for

every line of work capable of being taken up in individual responsibility to the great Head of the priestly house.

We ought to do nothing which we cannot do under Christ, and in fellowship with Him. And all that can be done in fellowship with Christ can surely be done in fellowship with those who are walking with Him.

The Minor Prophets.

I. HOSEA TO ZEPHANIAH.

HOSEA predicts the transporting of the ten tribes, and then he announces that by the captivity of Judah there would no longer be a recognized people of God upon earth, but that at the end they should set up for themselves one only Head (Christ): and the day of blessing should be great. Israel should remain a long time without the true God, and without false gods; without sacrifice and without idols; but would own Jehovah and David (Christ) in the last days. Their repentance is depicted in the last chapter.

JOEL foretells, on the occasion of a famine, the destruction of the northern army, and then

the gift of the Spirit to all flesh before the terrible day shall come.

AMOS, after having threatened judgment that should be executed upon different nations of Canaan, declares that the patience of God will no longer bear with the iniquity of Israel; but he sets forth also (as do all the prophets) the return and blessing of Israel, adding that they shall never more be rooted out of their land.

OBADIAH is a prophecy against Edom, whose jealousy of Jerusalem and implacable hatred are often spoken of; then he announces the day of Jehovah for the judgment of the nations, and the deliverance of Zion, as always.

JONAH has a special character. If Jehovah had chosen Israel to be a people set apart to preserve the knowledge of His name upon the earth, He is none the less the God of the Gentiles, and a God of goodness and mercy. When privileges put into the shade the knowledge of what God is in Himself, the possession of these privileges becomes a stern party spirit: this was clearly shown in the Jews. It is remarkable that in Jonah the testimony of divine mercy is addressed to the great enemy of God's people. We see also in this prophet, the ways of God when repentance is manifested. Furthermore, in some respects Jonah is a well-known type of the Saviour.

The subject of chapter iv. is in contrast with the special blessing upon the Jews at the end; God is likewise the God of the nations.

MICAH resembles ISAIAH in many points, but the development of God's plans is much less complete in his book, while he appeals more to the conscience of the people. But the promises made to Abraham and to Jacob will be fulfilled.

In NAHUM, God's indignation is aroused against the pride of human power and dominion, and Nineveh (the Assyrian) is destroyed. The race will never be re-instated, and Judah is finally delivered.

HABAKKUK is the expression of faith in Jehovah, in spite of everything, and of God's ways in the history of the people. The prophet complains of the iniquity that surrounds him in Israel: God shows to him the Chaldeans, whom He is bringing to visit the land in judgment because of this iniquity. Then the prophet's affection for the people is awakened, and he complains of the Chaldeans; and God shows him that he must live by faith: He will punish these violent enemies, whose passions He had used as a rod to chasten Israel; but the man of faith must wait. The day of Jehovah shall come, and the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. The prophet recalls the former deliverance of

Israel, and rejoices in Jehovah, although no blessing from Him be apparent.

ZEPHANIAH announces a judgment upon the land, which will allow no iniquity to escape: the day of Jehovah, a day of wrath, of trouble and of anguish, when the land shall be devoured by Jehovah's wrath. The meek will have to seek Jehovah to be "sheltered" (chap. ii. 3). First of all Israel, then the Gentiles, shall be judged, the Assyrian being their head (for here Israel is owned). Then comes that which concerns Jerusalem, as though God had said, She will repent; but she became corrupt, going from bad to worse. The prophet takes this opportunity to call the remnant to wait upon Jehovah who was about to gather all the nations to judge them in His anger. Then, everything would be changed: all the nations would call upon Jehovah out of a pure heart, and Israel should be brought back to Him in hearty repentance, iniquity would be found in them no longer, and they should be for a people of renown and glory amongst all the nations of the earth; a fitting conclusion to all God's ways spoken of by the prophets.

The prophets that follow, prophesied after the return from Babylon, and have another character.

How God must be Known.

IN order that we may know God (the God who has condescended to interpose in the affairs of this world), mere light is not enough.

He must be known, not only as He is in His nature, although that is the essential and principal thing, but as He has revealed Himself in the totality of His ways; in those details in which our little, narrow hearts can learn His faithful, patient, condescending love; in those dealings which develop the abstract idea of His wisdom, so as to render it accessible to our limited intelligence; which can trace in it things which have been realized amongst men, although entirely above and beyond all their prevision; but which have been declared by God so that we know them to be of Him. Above all, God has been pleased to connect Himself in a special way with man in all these things. Marvellous privilege of His feeble creature!

Philosophy (senseless, narrow-minded, and even essentially stupid in its arguments), would have it that the world is too small for God thus to expend Himself on an impotent being like man, on that which is but a mere point in an immense universe.

Contemptible folly! As if the material extent of the theatre were the measure of the moral manifestations wrought upon it, and

of the war of principles which is there brought to an issue.

That which takes place in this world is the spectacle that unfolds, to all the intelligences of the universe, the ways, and the character, and the will of God. It is for us to receive thereby, through grace, understanding and power, that we may enjoy it, and that in us God may be glorified; not only BY us, which will be true of all things, but IN us.

This is our privilege, through the grace that is in Christ, and by our union with Him who is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. The more we are as little children, obedient and humble, the more we shall realize this glorious position. Hereafter we shall know as we are known. Meanwhile, THE MORE CHRIST IS OBJECTIVELY OUR PORTION AND OUR OCCUPATION THE MORE SHALL WE RESEMBLE HIM SUBJECTIVELY.

Thanks be to God! He has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. "Howbeit," says the apostle, "we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Cor. ii. 6, 7).

Scripture Knowledge: Its Right Acquisition and Use.

WE are not to think for others. Our communion as saints is not that of the blind leading the blind, nor is it that of the seeing leading the blind, but it is children of light walking together under the common grace of the one blessed Lord, and Author of light; and the mind of one brother is to give occasion to others to exercise themselves in the truth, in dependence on the Holy Ghost in them; owning, withal, the gift or grace in some to teach, or to exhort; as it is written, "He that teacheth (let him wait) on teaching, or he that exhorteth on exhortation."

But some are urgent after knowledge. They are ever schooling the mind. Their way calls for a continual effort, and acts as a constant pressure.

But the apostle had another method. He would have the teacher as little as possible act the teacher. He could call himself the teacher of the Gentiles (1 Tim. ii.), but he speaks rather as a loving companion or brother. "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me" (Rom. i. 11, 12). "I speak as unto my children," was his word also (2 Cor. vi. 13).

And this style of the apostle was but a distant expression of that of the Great Master Himself. As he intimates when he says (2 Cor. x.), "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." For this lets us know the Lord's style, so to speak, as a teacher. And it is blessed to know that *this* was the style of the Son of God in the midst of us.

He wanted to invest the heart of His disciples with a sense of nearness to Him. He did not deal with them as a patron or benefactor, as man deals with man (Luke xxii. 25). Man will be ready enough to confer benefits if he may occupy the place of acknowledged superiority. But the Lord Jesus brings His dependent one near to Him. He sat at the well's mouth beside the sinner whose spirit He sought to fill.

Was this patronage after the manner of men? Was this the condescension of a benefactor?

I believe it is something of heaven to apprehend this mind or style in Christ. But we have to be *admonished* as well as *comforted*. If we have this way in the Great Master to notice, we have our way as His disciples to consider and order.

It has been said (and it is much for the observation of our souls) that "we should take care how we traffic with unfelt truth."

A time of peace is a time in which the mind may indulge itself, and handle knowledge at leisure or speculatively. But knowledge is not divinely attained, truth is not spiritually learnt, if the mind have it as a speculation, or as propositions which the intellect digests and traffics with.

There is danger, now-a-days, of making the Bible "easy." The clear and full character of revelation in our dispensation is one of its great distinctions. That is true, and very blessedly true. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see," said the Lord. But still the facility with which divine knowledge may be now attained has its snare and its danger. We may get pleased with the attainment itself, without being stirred up, as we ought to be, to walk in those richer affections and in that deeper moral power, which is alone consistent with our enlarged measure of light and understanding.

The Church at Corinth abounded in knowledge (1 Cor. i. 5), but their walk was so unspiritual that the apostle would not treat them as though they had knowledge (1 Cor. iii. 1). And this shows us how the Lord abhors the trafficking in unfelt truth.

In heaven there may be ignorance, or want of knowledge, but no such thing as the possession of unfelt truth. The angels are heavenly creatures, but they confess their ignorance by

their desire to know (1 Peter i. 12). *Ignorant* of certain truths they are, but not *uninterested* about them.

So, righteous men and prophets have been ignorant, but not uninterested (Matt. xiii. 17; Luke x. 24; 1 Peter i. 10). And in the person of the patriarch Abraham, we see how some of old, in dispensations of less light and communicated knowledge, had such right affections, that the Spirit carried them beyond the measure of the stature of their age.

Speaking of Abraham, the Lord says that he "rejoiced to see My day: he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56). His "rejoicing" was the early or previous condition of his soul. It tells us, that he took an interest in the notices which had been afforded him of Christ. They were comparatively few and faint; but they captivated his soul. The glimpses were powerful. And the Lord honoured such an affection, and gave His servant a fuller vision. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; *he saw it.*" And then, as we further read, "he was glad." He used aright the knowledge he attained, as he had sought it aright. His *affections* were engaged in the search, and they were not cooled or deadened when he had found.

Here was knowledge *sought* and *used* in the due order. How the heart can say, Oh for more of this within and among us!

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A little knowledge, with personal exercise of spirit over it, is better than much knowledge without it. As the proverb says, "There is much food in the tillage of the poor." For the poor make the most of their little. They use the spade, the hoe, and the mattock; they weed, and they dress, and turn up their little garden of herbs. And their diligence gets much food out of it. And we are to be these "poor" ones, ever to use divine Scripture as they carry on their tillage, and make the most of our little. It may be but milk we feed on, but if we use our diligence to lay aside malice, and hypocrisies, and envies, and the like, we shall be really feeding and growing (1 Peter ii.). And because of this we often find much more savour of Christ in those who have less knowledge; for theirs is this "tillage of the poor" (Prov. xiii. 23).

The present is a time when many are running to and fro to increase knowledge of all kinds. And this must be a caution to our souls; for the saint has always to watch against the spirit of the times. And in these present times of light and knowledge (though it may be knowledge of God), we are still to remember that it is not food merely, but digestion, that nourishes. The clean animal, under the law, chewed the cud. And the Spirit of God, through the wisdom of Solomon, has said, "Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is

sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it " (Prov. xxv. 16).

And our Lord Himself, I may add, instructs us to know how we should cultivate divine knowledge, or knowledge of Scripture. For, in answering questions, He never appears to be satisfying curiosity, but He entertains enquiries, as one who had His eye on the soul of the enquirer, and not His ear merely open to his question. His words, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," shows us that His purpose was not to convey information, as we speak, but to direct the conscience, and feed the renewed mind according to its growing capacity. And this is divine. All other questioning and gathering of knowledge will be but the vain traffic of mere human or Athenian intellect (Acts xvii. 21).

But above all, beloved, we should remember that with our knowledge we must seek and cultivate that faith which *appropriates* what we know, makes it our own, and gives us personal joy and interest in it. This is the point of chief blessing to us. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Because it is *faith* which thus *appropriates* God, makes the Blessed One and His fulness our own, our home. And this is the thing of great price to us. God is a *home* to us. He is ours. We

are said to dwell in Him. A home becomes the very symbol of the due state of our souls when thinking of God. And faith alone gives us this, and this is of chiefest value to us. For who does not feel the charm of home? As we say, "Home is home, be it ever so homely." We instinctively appropriate to ourselves all that is there. The furniture may be mean, but it is our own. That is the thought the heart prizes. All that we see reminds us of our rights, our connections, our enjoyments. And thus "home is home." And so with our God. Faith makes Him a home to the heart. Knowledge furnishes the house, but faith eyes all, be it more or less, as our own.

Oh for increase of faith! A scribe may be much instructed; he may look at the house of glory, and speak of its costliness, tell of the trophies of David, and of the curtains of Solomon, which hang there; but all the time he may be but a visitor. He may pass through all this grandeur, without appropriating faith, without his soul carrying the sense that he is at home in this wealthy place. While another may have less faculty to unfold those curtains, and decypher those trophies, or to weigh the gold and silver of the house, but withal he may have that precious faith which blessedly appropriates all that it sees, be it more or less, and thus makes him not a visitor, but a child at home in God's house.

And seasonable, most seasonable, now-a-days, is the voice of one in other days: "Wouldest thou know that the matters contained in the word of Christ are real things? Then never read them for mere knowledge sake. Look for some beams of Christ's glory and power in every verse. Account nothing knowledge, but as it is seasoned with some revelation of the glorious presence of Christ and His quickening Spirit. Use no discourse about spiritual truths for mere conversation sake, but mind the promoting of edification. And use not duties for mere custom or service sake, but for nearer communion with God."

This is the grace we may well covet. "Lord, increase our faith."

Christ presents God to us under three aspects :

(1) His **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, that strikes the Substitute for us.

(2) His **LOVE**, that provides the Lamb for us; and

(3) His **GLORY**, that has raised Him up from the dead, when all was clear for us.

There is thus entire deliverance. We are in Christ before God. The greatest expression of divine hatred of sin is found in His cross. The stroke of judgment fell; the thunder and lightning are exhausted; the sky is pure and calm for those who believe.

Full Assurance of Faith.

ALL believers have not this happy assurance. Some because they do not know the blessed truth, that the *righteousness of God* is "unto all, and upon all them that *believe*" (Rom. iii. 22). Others, because carelessness of walk grieves the Spirit, and dims the eyes of their understanding and faith.

Moreover there are various characters of faith. We read of "little faith," "great faith," as well as "full assurance of faith"; but the weakest in the faith is not less justified, not less accounted righteous, than the strongest in the faith.

We do not get pardoned at one time, justified at another, sanctified at another. No; receiving Christ crucified, risen and glorified, for salvation, we have ALL AT ONCE. We are washed in His blood, justified by His blood, sanctified by His blood. All *are* yours, and ye are Christ's. The Father "HATH blessed us with ALL spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23; Eph. i. 3). This is the present portion of the most feeble-minded believer in Christ; but the personal enjoyment of this wondrous grace will be just as we, by faith, abide in the Lord Jesus.

There are some believers who are so weak in faith, and so uninstructed in divine things (perhaps because they do not daily read and

prayerfully meditate on the Scriptures), that they stagger at being told that they have life and righteousness *in Christ*. While they believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, they shrink from crediting the glorious reality that God has made Christ to be unto them “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. i. 30).

Such, however, lose much joy, as well as strength for service and conflict, and are often filled with gloomy and distressing thoughts; they doubt, and fear, and brood over self and circumstances, because they do not look away from every other object straight to Christ at God’s right hand, and believe God’s infallible word, which ASSURES THEM of their completeness and security in the glorified Saviour of sinners.

• In some respects they are like Abram was in Genesis xv., for although God had told him that He had brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, to *give* him the land to inherit it, he seemed to doubt whether God really meant what He said, whether He would keep His word, and fulfil His promise. Abram was righteous by faith (v. 6), yet he had doubt and mistrust, like many in the present day. God told him that He brought him from Ur to *give* him the land. This should have been enough to warrant his *assurance* and *confidence*; but it was not. He therefore said, “Lord

God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? ” (v. 8).

This leads us more particularly to the subject of *assurance*. What is it? Is it spiritual attainment? or is it equally the portion of the babe in Christ, who simply takes God at His word?

We reply, It is resting, as a sinner, on God's promise in Christ. This many babes in Christ enjoy. God has given His word of truth, shown us His work in Christ, and revealed Himself as the faithful and unchangeable God. He tells us that He “so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John iii. 16).

This should be enough; but, alas! it often is not. It is an awful thing to doubt God's word; and yet this is the chief reason why many believers have not “full assurance of faith” (Heb. x. 22).

Abram was mistrusting God about the land when he said, “Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?”

What was God's reply? Did He tell Abram that it depended upon his experience, or duties, or feelings?

No; He taught Abram that blessing comes to fallen man only through sacrifice, that God's *eternal blessings* are made sure to us by sacrifice; therefore God sent him to the

sacrifice to realize assurance. God's reply was, "Take ME an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon" (v. 9).

There, at the sacrifice, Abram was to learn God's character and mind, whereby he might have the *assurance* that he would inherit the land.

It seems to me that we learn from the case before us that there are two things needful for any one to enjoy assurance:—1. Self-renunciation. 2. The apprehension of God's thoughts of Christ.

Let us consider them a little.

1. SELF-RENUNCIATION. It is wonderful how thoughts of creature-righteousness cleave to us. It is hard indeed habitually to take the place of "no confidence in the flesh"; that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"; that in our flesh dwells "no good thing"; and that no measure of devotedness can make the promise of God in Christ more secure.

But these things the Spirit of God teaches. He convinces of sin, and testifies of Christ; and God's declaration must be carried out, that "no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. i. 29). It is often a very humbling process to learn by the Spirit's teaching, that being born anew does not improve the flesh; that the believer has two natures; that there is

no similarity in "the flesh" and "the Spirit"; that "the flesh" always remains the same, only that it is to be kept under by "the Spirit." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6).

Do we not gather from the fact, that while Abram was before the sacrifice, and "an horror of great darkness fell upon him," he was taught by God Himself the humbling lessons of self-loathing and unworthiness, that he might be the more thoroughly convinced that he could inherit the land only on the ground of God's free grace?

And when the Holy Spirit opens up to us our history before God, and discloses to us the real character of the thoughts and intents of our hearts, the iniquity of our most holy things, the pride of our humblest doings, the self-love and unbelief that are associated with our most devoted hours, do we not know something too of a horror of darkness? We often need, as well as Abram, humbling exercises, that we may lean wholly upon God, and know how to ground all our expectations of good on a source entirely outside ourselves. And where shall we learn these lessons so effectually as in the presence of God, in the contemplation of what He has done for us, and has made us in Christ?

So long as thoughts of creature-merit or

sufficiency are allowed by us, doubts and fears will distress the soul, because the eye will look within, instead of wholly to God in Christ. Or, if thoughts of our own doing be mixed up with our standing before God, we shall slide away from grace, get under law, and lack assurance; or if we set up some standard of experience and walk, as evidences, so long as we come up to our imagined measure, will there be quiet self-complacency; but when we come short, our fancied evidences will be gone, and gloom, and fear, and perhaps despair, will follow. There must be the sense of our total ruin and vileness in the flesh, to look wholly to God, through Christ, with quietness and *assurance*.

2. THE APPREHENSION OF GOD'S THOUGHTS OF CHRIST AND HIS WORK. Let none suppose that they will have "full assurance of faith," if the contemplation of Christ and His cross be neglected. The Scriptures testify of Him. The Holy Spirit testifies of Him. We know we have the earnest of the Spirit, because we look wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance with God; and it is to the person and work of Christ that the Spirit continually leads us.

The victims that Abram was commanded to take for God were in their prime, to represent the perfection of the "Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. i. 19). The

fowls came down on the carcasses, but he drove them away, because it was God's sacrifice, and should be honoured. He divided some into pieces, and laid each piece one against another. Here he remained, *before the sacrifice*, under divine instruction; and when all around was dark, and a horror of great darkness was within, when every earthly hope and confidence were gone, then a burning furnace and a smoking lamp passed between the pieces; the former, to teach that divine wrath could be expended on the victim, and all the rivers of eternal love flow without obstruction to the sinner that believes; and the latter, to show that divine light had searched the sacrifice, and rightly estimated its value.

We are then told that "the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I *given this land*"; and we do not read that the patriarch had another question on the subject. The threefold cord of his assurance and confidence was the promise of God, the redemption-work of God, and the faithfulness of God.

And surely this is the secret of assurance with us. It is not based on what we are, but on what God is; and we know our personal interest in His eternal blessings, by being led by His Spirit to renounce ourselves, and look to the one only sacrifice for sin, the alone ground of acceptance with God.

Let us now seek to apply these truths. Whenever, dear Christian reader, your soul is assailed with doubts and fears, look at once straight to Jesus, the Lamb as it had been slain, now in the midst of the throne (Rev. v.) Beware of looking within for righteousness; for Christ in the glory is your righteousness (Rom. x. 4). Beware of looking at the Spirit's work IN you as a ground of justification; for we are justified by the blood of Christ. Beware of comparing yourselves with others as a proof of your acceptance; for Christ only is the way to the Father. Beware of looking at your frames or experiences as evidences; for we often change, and our hearts are very deceitful; but the love of Christ changeth not.

Oh! like Abram, look at God's sacrifice. Contemplate the perfection, spotlessness, the eternal beauty and worth of Jesus. His fitness, His fulness, His love, His offices. Consider His ways, His sayings, His sufferings, agonies, blood-shedding and death. Behold the Holy One made sin for us, and let the "burning lamp," the light of God's truth, shine upon the scene. Hearken to God's testimony. Listen to *His* judgment of the value of the cross. See sin put away, and righteousness brought in. Welcome the testimony of God that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth *us* (yes, *US*) from *all* sin; that we are "*justified* freely by His grace," and "accepted

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in the Beloved" (Rom. iii. 24; Eph. i. 6). Oh! behold your iniquities, transgressions, and sins laid upon Him, your old man crucified with Him, the fierce wrath of Jehovah going over Him, that you might be free.

Abiding here, self-loathing will take the place of self-righteousness; self-abasement will displace self-confidence; assurance will banish doubt, and praise and thanksgiving will ascend to the Father of mercies in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps my reader is a backslider. You have lost the *assurance* of your interest in Christ. You were once happy in the Lord, and happy with His people. You took sweet counsel together, and found His way to be ways of pleasantness and peace. But you grew careless; you neglected secret prayer, you discontinued the daily reading of the Scriptures, you little and little gave up the public and private society of God's children. You became intimate with worldlings, and *walked with them*. You indulged in sin. Your conscience was at first troubled, but by degrees it became hardened; yet you have not been happy. Your assurance and confidence in God are gone. "O wretched man that I am!" you sometimes exclaim. Be assured, friend, that the Lord loves you still, though your ways have so grieved Him.

Return, then, to Him *at once*; acknowledge

your iniquity; confess your sins; tell Him *all* your sad course, and He will restore you; He will pardon, He will heal your backslidings, and love you freely. “If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John i. 9).

The precious atonement of Christ forms the base of that platform on which “A JUST GOD” and a justified sinner meet in sweet communion.

In that atonement I see sin condemned, justice satisfied, the law magnified, the sinner saved, the adversary confounded.

Creation never exhibited aught like this. There the creature enjoyed the manifestation of power and wisdom and goodness; but the fairest fields of the old creation presented nothing like “grace reigning through righteousness”; nothing like a glorious combination of “mercy and truth,” “righteousness and peace.” It was reserved for CALVARY to display all this.

Gleanings from the Lorneville Conference.

SEPTEMBER 7TH TO 11TH, 1910.

THE Conference began with prayer on Wednesday evening, September 7th, at eight o'clock, when the Lord gave much liberty. The Conference was characterized throughout with the spirit of prayer and supplication. Each morning the saints came together at nine o'clock for prayer, and each evening before the gospel was preached.

All through the meetings the presence of the Lord and the leading of the Holy Spirit were manifest, and there was not a disturbing element. The Lord was pleased to bring together about seventy-five of His dear saints from different places in the U.S.A. and Canada.

THURSDAY.

In the morning we read John vi. 29-71, where we have Christ presented as the food of His people; and it was pointed out that, in the Old Testament, Christ is presented figuratively in three ways, as the One on whom we feed: 1st. As the roasted lamb (Exod. xii.). 2nd. As the manna (Exod. xvi.), and 3rd. As the old corn of the land (Joshua v.). In John vi. it is Christ as the Manna, the Bread which came down from heaven; not what the earth affords. But none could ever feed upon Christ as the Manna if they had not first fed upon Him as the roasted Lamb (v. 51).

In the afternoon we read Rev. iii. Our attention was called to verse 4: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments," etc.; because we are apt to be puffed up, and think we are the people. God has His own in Sardis. We are in danger of being like Elijah. (See 1 Kings xix. 14-19).

Rev. i. was referred to. John once could lay his head on Jesus' bosom (John xiii. 23-25); but here, seeing Him presented in His judicial character, he fell at His feet as dead (v. 17). And our failure has been that we have not fallen at His feet as dead ones. The true position for the saints now is to be humbled at the feet of Jesus, as John was. If the Church had not fallen, the Lord Jesus would not be revealed in that character (Rev. i. 13-19).

There was a gospel address in the evening at eight o'clock from Luke iv. 16-20.

FRIDAY.

At 10.30 we read Phil. i. 25 and ii., where we have Paul desiring to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Yet he was willing to forego all this joy and blessedness for the sake of the dear saints of God. How this is lost sight of to-day! Paul's interests were the interests of Christ, and he was the living expression of what he wrote and preached. The secret of true service is love

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and devotedness to Christ. 1 Chron. xi. 17, 20, was referred to as an illustration of self-sacrifice, where the three men broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem, and brought it to David. It was done simply to gratify the heart of David. If we think of our brethren, and of what they are to Christ, we shall not think very much of ourselves; and the closer we walk to the Lord the more we shall feel the terrible self that is in us.

At three o'clock there was a meeting for edification. A brother read Malachi iii., where we see the readiness of the human heart to turn from the living God; self-seeking, etc., instead of pleasing God. A terrible exposure of the awful condition of these highly privileged people of God. A picture of our own condition. Then the necessity of the Lord sitting as a refiner and purifier of silver (iii. 5). The refiner of silver sits near the pot in which the metal is, and keeps his eye on the silver in order to give more or less heat. Not too much heat, lest the silver should be spoiled; and not too little or the dross would not be purged out. The process of purifying was complete when the image of the refiner was reflected in the silver. So we must remember the end the Lord has in view. We are to reflect Christ in this world.

Another brother called attention to Nehe-

miah iii. 20 and John i. 35. "Baruch, the son of Zabbai, earnestly repaired the other piece." An illustration of what should be the purpose of each of us, to repair the breach which the enemy has been making amongst us. Then in John i. 35, the Person of Christ. The two disciples did not follow John, but they followed Jesus.

A brother then read Rom. xi. 29, as showing that God never takes away what He gives. Then the Book of Haggai was referred to (i. 6, 7). "Ye have sown much, and bring in little," etc. They had been sowing to themselves instead of living to God; hence the word (v. 7), "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways." We need to search our hearts, and go on with God. In chap. ii. 4, "I am with you." Chap. ii. 5, "My spirit remaineth among you." Then they had His word. This is our provision for a day of ruin. We have God, His Spirit, and His precious Word. Gen. xxvi. was referred to. Isaac, a picture of a man that was walking with God, and he had three things: a *well*, an *altar*, and a *tent*. The WELL representing the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the believer. The TENT telling us we are strangers and pilgrims here, and also speaking to us of God's care and love. We are sheltered from the heat and from the cold. The ALTAR: he was a worshipper.

Gospel meeting, eight o'clock: 1 Samuel xvii. and xviii.

SATURDAY.

At 10.30 we read part of John xiv. Peter's failure in chap. xiii. did not hinder the love of Christ's heart flowing out; so we read, "Let not your heart be troubled," etc. Christ the Son would be at home in the Father's house, and He must have them at home with Him.

In the afternoon at three, we had a meeting for edification, and a brother read Rev. xxi. 1-8. God's purpose was to have a scene where He could *dwell* with His people. Not merely visit them, but *dwell* with them. The condition of innocence in which Adam and Eve were found in Gen. ii. was not that in which He could dwell with man. He could visit them, also Abraham, Gen. xviii., and partake of his hospitality. And that which Abraham presented to the Lord speaks to us of Christ. The cakes of fine flour; the calf, tender and good. Then in Exod. xv. 2, after Israel was redeemed, they could speak of preparing God an *habitation* (see Exod. xv. 17, and Exod. xxv. 8; also Ps. lxxviii. 68, 69; cxxxii. 5). The New Testament reveals another purpose of God, the hundred and twenty disciples, and thousands of others, were builded into the temple of God (see Eph. ii. 22; 1 Cor. iii. 16). In Rev. xxi. 1-10 we have the final delight of God's heart, dwelling in rest that nothing can

disturb. His dwelling-place, that in which His heart is at home.

Another brother read Num. ix. 15-23; x., xvii. and xix. We have had the purpose of God; now, in these scriptures, we get the provision for the journey. The pillar of cloud, and the silver trumpets representing the Word of God, which we have for our guidance. Then in Num. xvii. we get Aaron's rod that budded, etc., representing the Priesthood of Christ for us on high. Then in Num. xix. we have the Red Heifer, answering to John xiii. and 1 John ii. 1 : the Advocacy of Christ.

There was a gospel address in the evening from Luke xv.

LORD'S DAY.

At 10.30 a.m. the saints came together to break bread; and all enjoyed a precious time together in the presence of the Lord. A brother spoke from John xx. 11, and another brother from 1 John iii. 1-5, connected with John xvii. 22.

There was a meeting for the children at two o'clock, and an open-air meeting, well attended, at 3.30, at which a gospel address was given from John xix. There was also gospel preaching in the hall at seven o'clock from 2 Kings vi. and vii., and Luke xiv.

Two brothers went to St. John and preached the Word in the hall and on the street, where a large number heard the gospel.

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Perhaps the most happy feature of all was, the very remarkable way in which the Lord has been pleased to work in His grace amongst the young people. The gospel had been faithfully preached during the Conference, but on Monday morning at the prayer-meeting it was evident to all present that the Spirit of God was at work in souls, as several were completely broken down, without a word having been spoken to them. That day several souls confessed Christ as their Saviour, and from that day the Lord has been working, and each day since the saints have had great joy in seeing one and another of their dear children confess Christ. In some homes three or four have confessed Christ.

God has thus answered the *faith* and prayers of His beloved people. There is an ear for the Word of God, so that since the Conference ended meetings have been held at three and 7.30 p.m. daily. An idea of the interest may be imagined when it is mentioned that for two evenings past, namely, Wednesday and Thursday, September 13th and 14th, we did not leave the meeting-room till eleven p.m. There have been souls confess Christ for the past four days. It is simply blessed to be in such an atmosphere where God is working. Some now desire to take their place at the Lord's Table. Last night others were exercised about their souls, but did not find peace.

We count on God to carry on His blessed work in Lorneville. . . . We see in the work of God here, that He honours *faith*, and He also delights to minister joy to the hearts of His dear people. God is thus proving in a very blessed and decided way that *He is still with us*, and as He promised (Mal. iii. 10), is pouring us out a blessing.

Thus the dear saints of God everywhere can share with us in our joy, knowing that their prayers for the Conference *have not been in vain*. Let us all continue to pray earnestly to God that His work may go on *here and everywhere*, and that God in all things might be glorified.

At the time of writing, I am glad to say two or three others confessed Christ on Saturday night, one young man being very bright and happy, who came and shook hands with us all. Three young sisters took their place at the Lord's Table with us on Lord's Day, the 18th September, and were very happy. One was baptized on Saturday.

These few lines are sent out in the hope that the dear saints everywhere might be encouraged in these last difficult and trying times.

With warmest love in our Lord Jesus Christ,
I remain, your affectionate Brother in Him,
19th September, 1910. * * *

Lorneville, St. John Co.,
New Brunswick, Canada.

Christ the Bread of Life.

READ JOSHUA V.

CHRIST may be considered as the food of the Christian in three ways.

First, as a redeemed sinner.

Secondly, in connection with sitting in heavenly places in Christ; and,

Thirdly, as a stranger and pilgrim down here. But this last is merely accessory, and not the proper portion of the Christian.

The Lord said to Moses that He had come down to deliver the people of Israel from Egypt, and bring them into the land of Canaan. He did not say a word about the wilderness when He came to deliver them from Egypt, because His interference for them there was in the power of redemption, and for the accomplishment of His promises.

However, there was the wilderness, as well as redemption from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan; and Christ answers as our food to these three things. Two of them are permanent; for we are nourished by Christ in two ways permanently; that is, in redemption and glory. The third way is as the manna which we have all along the road.

It is in these three ways that Christ meets His people, and nourishes them all the way. Two of them remain, as we have seen; but the third ceases when the circumstances it was

to meet have passed away. They did eat the passover and the manna until they got into the land, then the manna ceased; but they continued to eat of the passover.

Now, there are two ways in which it is proper for us ever to be feeding on Christ. First, as the passover; for they ate the paschal lamb when the wilderness had ceased, and Egypt had been long left behind.

When in Egypt, the blood was on the lintel and the door-posts, and the Israelite ate of the lamb inside the house. The thought they had while they were eating it was, that God was going through the land as an avenging judge; and the effect of the blood on the doorposts was to keep God out, which was a great thing to do; for if brought into God's presence as a judge, woe be to him in whom sin is found.

The state of the one that now eats of Christ is just according as he estimates the value of the cross, through fear of what sin actually merits. When we have got into the effect of the blood of the paschal lamb, we have got into Canaan, and enjoy the peace of the land as a delivered people, having crossed the Jordan, not only the Red Sea; that is, we have passed through death and resurrection; not as knowing Christ dead and risen for us merely, as presented in the Red Sea, but as being dead with Him, and entered into heavenly places with Him, as across the Jordan.

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Then the character of God is known as *their God*; that is, the Accomplisher of all that which He purposed towards them. It is not keeping God out now, but it is enjoying His love; not looking at God as in the cross pouring out wrath in judgment against sin. In Jesus, on the cross, there was perfect justice and perfect love. What devotedness to the Father, and what tender love to us!

And this is the way the saint who is in peace feeds on the cross. It is not feeding on it as knowing that he is safe; for Israel's keeping the passover after they got into Canaan was very different from their keeping it when judgment was passing over. In Canaan they were in peace, and they were able to glorify God in this way, in the remembrance of their redemption from Egypt.

In this type we see presented, not the sinner that feels he is safe, but the saint that can glorify God in his affections, his heart confidently flowing out to Him, and feeding on Christ as the old corn of the land, the second Man, the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. x., xv.). We see Christ now by faith at the right hand of God as the glorified Man, not merely as Son of God, but as Son of man; as Stephen, when the heavens were opened to him, beheld *Jesus* at the right hand of God. We also see Him up there. We do not see Him as He is represented in the Revelation, seated on a

white horse, coming forth out of heaven (Rev. xix.). He will indeed come forth, and receive us up where He is, and we shall be like Him, and be for ever with Him; but we shall feed on Him as the old corn of the land when we are there, and this is our proper portion now; manna is not our portion, though it is our provision by the way.

Joshua sees Jehovah as the Captain of Jehovah's host, and Israel feeds in the land before they fight. And our portion is to sit down in it before we fight, because God has given it to us. They do not eat the manna in Canaan, because it is for the wilderness. The manna is not Christ in the heavens; it is Christ down here. It is not our portion; our portion is the old corn of the land; that is, the whole thing, according to God's counsels, is redemption and glory. But all our life is exercise down here, or sin (excepting that God does give us moments of joy), because while here there is nothing but what acts on the flesh, or gives occasion for service to God. We may fail, and then Christ comes, and feeds us with manna; that is, His sympathy with us down here, and shows how His grace is applied to all the circumstances of our daily life; and that is a happy thing.

For most of our time, the far greater part of our life, we are occupied in these things, necessary and lawful things no doubt, but not

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occupied with heavenly joy in Christ; and these things are apt to turn away the heart from the Lord, and hinder our joy. But if we would have an appetite to feed on Him as the old corn of the land, we must have the habit of feeding on Him as the manna.

For instance, something may make me impatient during the day. Well, then, Christ is my patience; and thus He is the manna to sustain me in patience. He is the source of grace, not merely the example which I am to copy. He is more than this; for I am to draw strength from Him, to feed upon Him daily; for we need Him, and it is impossible to enjoy Him as the paschal lamb, unless we are also feeding on Him as the manna.

We know that God delights in Christ, and He gives us a capacity to enjoy Him too. To have such affections is the highest possible privilege; but to enjoy Him, we must feed on Him every day. It is to know Christ come down to bring the needed grace, and turn the dangerous circumstances with which we are surrounded to the occasion of our feeding on Himself as the manna to sustain us and strengthen us in our trial.

The Minor Prophets.

II.—HAGGAI TO MALACHI.

HAGGAI is full of interest, though simple and short. He would have the people to think of Jehovah, and not of their worldly interests; he would have them to set to work again to build the House, the progress of which the enemies had interrupted, and that they should do it, trusting in Jehovah, and without waiting for the leave of the king of Persia. The Jews did so, and in fact, when they acted by faith, Providence helped them by the king's authorization. But for faith, GOD undertook all for them; and He controls the hearts of kings. It is the order of faith acting according to God's word, here given by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. At the same time this furnishes the prophet with the opportunity of announcing that God was going to shake the heavens and the earth, so that all human power, as well as the spiritual powers in the air, should be set aside. Then will be fulfilled that which the children cried by inspiration when Jesus entered Jerusalem: "Peace in heaven": and the power of Christ, the Head of Israel, will be established, identified with that of Jehovah.

ZECHARIAH takes up the re-establishment of Jerusalem at that time, but giving the history of the city until the FIRST coming of the

Christ, and even until the SECOND. He speaks, indeed, of the destruction of the nations who laid Jerusalem waste, but of this only incidentally. Jerusalem is justified, then blessed by the administration of grace, according to perfect and divine order; the wicked are separated, and find their place with Babylon; and Christ is brought in. There is the second prophecy, beginning with chapter vii., which, in chapter xi., introduces the rejection of Christ at His first coming; and Israel is given up into the hands of the wicked shepherd. Then Jerusalem will be the place where the nations shall be judged, and the spirit of repentance shall be poured upon the people because of the death of the Man who is Jehovah's Fellow. Jerusalem will be taken, but Jehovah shall come forth to judge her enemies, and everything in her shall be sanctified.

MALACHI shows us the moral decay of the people after their return from Babylon; but there will be a remnant. John the Baptist's mission is predicted, the day of Jehovah is coming, and the advent of Elijah is announced: the people are brought back to the law. Notice carefully that CHRISTIANITY does *not* appear here, but the Christ and His rejection; the Shepherd (Zech. xiii.) is smitten, and the sheep are scattered. Then follows the judgment.

It is easily perceived that, in these three prophecies uttered after the return from Babylon, when one of the "Beasts" (Dan. vii.) had already fallen, although the nations be necessarily alluded to (for it was their time, they possessed the world), the range of prophecy grows considerably narrower, and we find much more direct detail in relation to the Christ.

The great actors amongst the nations are there, and there they find themselves judged; they are there awaiting the last judgments, to make way for Babylon and the Beasts, whose history we have in Daniel, all associated with the captivity of the Jews in that city, for this captivity characterized the position.

Up to that time there had been the Assyrian, but the throne of God had been in the midst of the people at Jerusalem; now, though the captivity under the dominion of the Gentiles still subsists and is recognized, the horizon, I repeat, gets narrower, and the scene is more filled with CHRIST Himself, and details in connection with restored Jerusalem.

Then comes the great day of Jehovah.

Power and Blessing in the Day of Small Things.

READ HAGGAI II.

I HAVE regarded this second, and indeed [also the] first chapter of Haggai, as deeply instructive, mainly as showing God's blessing and power towards a remnant.

The work of building the house of the Lord was now begun. The word of the Lord had come to them before, reproving them, that though they could find time to dwell in their ceiled houses, and did not suffer any trifle or difficulty to interfere in the way of erecting them, yet if they met with any difficulty in endeavouring to raise the Lord's house, they immediately gave that up. The time was *not* come that the Lord's house should be built, they said (i. 1, 4).

Happily this reproof of the prophet had stirred up the minds of the people; they did begin to build; and immediately the word of the Lord came to them to encourage them: "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts" (ii. 4).

The building proceeds; and now, in this second chapter, the word of the Lord comes to speak to them concerning this building. It tells them the Lord had not despised "the day of small things" (Zech. iv. 10). Man might, but God did not. "Who is left among you

that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?"

But what then? "Yet now be *strong*, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord. . . . And be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and *work*; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." For He adds, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not."

And if the Spirit remained among them, was not that all they needed? Is He not the Author of all power, of all wisdom, of all grace? Moving on the face of the waters at the beginning for creation; the Author of all power in judges or in prophets? And if that was true in its sense (for the Spirit INDWELLING was not yet given, John vii. 39) to the remnant in an earthly dispensation at its close, shall it be less true in a heavenly, spiritual one, when "the Spirit ABIDING" (John xiv. 16) is one of the great glories of the dispensation? Shall God be more faithful to the covenant of Moses than of Christ? respect more the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob than those "Yea and Amen" in Him?

The Spirit, therefore, remains with the faithful remnant of God's people, to guide them, to lead on, to give them wisdom and strength amidst difficulties and enemies. "And," says

the Lord, "I will shake the heavens, and the earth," etc. (v. 6). For when the Lord takes up the cause of His people; He lets nothing stand in the way. "When He His people's cause defends, who then can do them harm?" "Since thou wast precious in My sight thou wast honourable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life" (Isaiah xliii. 4). "And the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts" (v. 7).

Remark how beautiful is the hope of God's people in [a time of] apostasy, and the close of their dispensation is, not in their temple becoming equal to the former temple (though seeking themselves to stand in all God's will), but in the blessed better hope of the coming of Him, who is Himself the temple and glory. Then shall all be put straight.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" (vv. 8, 9).

If inclined to murmur now about small things, I would say it shows we are out of communion with the Lord's mind. It is out of the "small things" that He brings His greater glory. Is not this the principle enunciated by Christ in 2 Cor. xii. 9. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is *made perfect* in weakness"; and so blessedly

accepted by Paul in the words, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." If, therefore, we despise small things, we are judging after the flesh, the outward appearance, not in communion with the Lord's mind about it.

The word of the Lord comes further upon the matter in the tenth verse. It seems to speak of man's inability by himself to do good, and of his ability only to do evil. They could not, according to the law, sanctify anything indifferent in itself by their touch, but could only defile it; showing that man defiles, by his own corruption, even the work of the Lord that is in his hands: "So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands: and that which they offer there is unclean" (v. 14).

But why is this said? Is it to degrade? Oh! no, it is only to humble; it is only that in the deep consciousness of our own insufficiency, of our own defilement of such holy work, we may carry on the Lord's *service*. Yet, thus carried on, God can and will accept it. It is that, like Paul, we may serve the Lord in all humility of mind, with many tears, etc. (Acts xx. 12). And this, I fear, we much fail in. Yet, as was said, grace can accept the sincere, though feeble desire of obedience. There had been nothing but leanness before; leanness,

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because they had departed from the living God, with whom alone is the riches and fatness of the olive-tree; and the harvest was not yet brought into the barn: the vine, the fig-tree, and the pomegranates had not yet brought forth their fruit. Yet, "From this day will I bless you," the Lord said. Peace and blessing are both here recorded for them (*vv.* 9, 19).

Yet again; the Lord has another word for them; for as I said (and the great point that I think is brought out in this prophet is that), God's almighty strength is connected even with the weakness of His people: "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying," etc. The Lord said He would overthrow even "the throne of kingdoms" for their sake, to deliver them: He would "destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen": He would "overthrow the chariots, and those that rode in them; and the horses and riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother" (*v.* 22; see what was noticed on *v.* 6).

Let this thought therefore dwell on our hearts, dear brethren, that the least remnant of God's people, as more especially standing in the communion of His mind, is connected with all His power. In the day of their greatest weakness they stand as a connecting link with all His mighty purposes, which are soon to be manifested.

God could not, so to speak, do without that

link : He could not, in His grace, do without a remnant according to the "election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5). And they have only to know His mind in faithfulness, in order to stand connected with that power soon to be revealed.

It may be said, perhaps, that all this dispensation has been a connecting link, a final dispensation as to the consummation of all things. Upon us the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. x. 11). How much more upon us who stand even in the *end* of such an age; upon us, to whom more especially the cry has gone forth, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matt. xxv. 6).

May we indeed, dear brethren, stand having our loins girded about, and our lamps burning (Luke xii. 35). The much entering into that truth will indeed, under the Lord's blessing, give power to our souls : it will connect us with all the power and blessing of that day (Malachi iii. 10, etc.), will tell us, whether the Lord, even in the last closing days of a dispensation, when failure, and nothing but failure, has been proved to the uttermost, will be deficient, or less than ever He was in real blessing to His people : "I will . . . pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. iii. 10).

The next verse (23) of this chapter of Haggai, tells us, I think, of blessed nearness

to the faithful, nearness in that day. "I . . . will make thee as a signet"; even as Rev. iii. 20 tells us of the same even in Laodicea. (See Song of Sol. viii. 6).

Can [a time of] apostasy, then, rob us of nearness to Christ, that chiefest of all things? Oh! no; it should only drive us nearer to Him.

The Lord give us hearts to value such blessings: grace, and faithfulness to seek them in His appointed way (Mal. iii. 7).

God's Comforts the Stay of the Soul.

READ PSALM XCIV.

PSALMS XC—C. are connected together, and seem to me to describe the dealings of the Lord with the Jews, etc., in the latter day on the earth. But I am not going to speak of that now.

We may often derive comfort from principles which we find in such portions of the Scripture, revealing to us as they do God's character and ways; but it is important to know the mind of the Spirit in the primary sense, as we shall then be able to discern with a great deal more clearness and certainty what God is teaching *us* through them.

The two principles which form the basis of

what is dwelt on here are, that though the workers of iniquity are allowed to lift up their heads, and flourish, yet the Lord is, and will be, Most High for evermore.

There is the clear perception of this throughout. Under the temporary exaltation and prevalence of wickedness, the godly are in a very tried state; the righteous suffer; but vengeance belongs to God (not to the sufferer), therefore the cry (*vv.* 1, 2).

To such a height are the workers of iniquity allowed to go that, in the consciousness that the Lord's throne could not be cast down, the question comes in, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" (*v.* 20).

So completely has wickedness got place in the earth that there is a sort of question raised, whether the throne of iniquity could subsist in *companionship* in judgment with the divine throne.

The answer is, judgment is coming: "The Lord *our God* shall cut them off" (*v.* 23). Judgment shall return to righteousness in the place of trial and suffering.

The point on which I would dwell a little at present is the consolation of the saints during this time of trial; God's "comforts."

I. In the first place, we have the assurance: "The Lord knoweth the *thoughts of man*, that they are *vanity*" (*v.* 11).

2. Then, "*Blessed* is the man whom *Thou chastenest*, O Lord," etc. (vv. 12, 13).

As to the pride and purpose of man, *it* is settled in a word. The "*thoughts of man*" are not only inferior to God's wisdom, they are "*vanity*."

That settles the whole question. All that begins and ends in the heart of man is "*vanity*," and nothing else. Whatever the state of things around, though there may be a "multitude of thoughts within," as, "What will all this come to?" "How will that end?" and the like; every barrier we can raise, all our strength, all our weakness, whatever the wave after wave that may flow over us; the Lord's thought about it all is, that it is "*vanity*."

All is working together to one object, God's plan, that upon which His heart is set, the glorification of Jesus, and ours, with Him. Every thought and every plan of man must therefore be "*vanity*," because it has not this, God's object, for its object; and God's object always comes to pass. There cannot be *two* ends to what is going on. Let men break their hearts about it, all simply comes to nothing, the end of it is "*vanity*." God's object is, that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John v. 23).

Take a man of the world, the shrewdest cai-

culator, the ablest politician, or the greatest statesman, a poor bed-ridden saint is wiser than he, and more sure of having his plans brought about; for the heart of the simplest, feeblest saint runs in the same channel with God's, and, though the saint has not strength, *God has*.

In this psalm we find, first, the tumult of the enemies; then, that *God* has done it. So with the saint constantly in trial: he sees the work of Satan; *then*, God's hand in it, and he gets blessing. All the present effect of these dealings of "the wicked" is, "*Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.*"

The pit is not yet digged; the throne of iniquity is not yet put down.

If, in chastening, the power of the *adversary* is against us, the *Lord's end* in it all is, to give "rest from the days of adversity," etc.

I speak not merely of suffering for Christ. If we are reproached for the name of Christ, it is only for joy, and triumph, and glory to us; but of those things in which there may be the "multitude of thoughts within," because we see that we have been walking inconsistently and carelessly in the Lord's ways.

Still it is, "*Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord.*" The Lord does not

chasten willingly, without a needs-be for it. And when there has been failure or inconsistency that brings chastisement, He turns the occasion of the chastisement to the working out of the heart's evil that needed to be chastened. The Lord, in chastening, throws back the heart upon the springs which have been the occasion of the evil. The soul is hereby laid bare for the application of God's truth to it, that the word may come home with power. It is taught wherefore it has been chastened; and not only so, but it is brought into the secret of God's heart, it learns more of His character, who "will not cast off *His* people, neither forsake *His* inheritance" (v. 14). What God desires for us is, not only that we should have privileges conferred upon us, but that we should have fellowship with *Himself*. Through these chastenings the whole framework of the heart is brought into juxtaposition with *God*. And this stabilises and settles it on the certainty of the hope that grace affords.

Look at Peter after the enemy, had sifted him. Though his fall was most humbling and bitter, yet by it he gained a deeper knowledge of God, and a deeper acquaintance with himself, so that he could apply all that he had learned to his brethren.

The Lord gives our souls "rest from the days of adversity" by communion with Him-

self; not only communion in joy, but in holiness. We are thus brought into the secret of God. Circumstances are only used to break down the door, and *let in God*. God is near to the soul when He in the certainty of love comes within the circumstances, and is known as better than any circumstance.

The Lord never chastens without occasion for it, and yet "*Blessed* is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord."

There is not a more wonderful word than that! I do not say that a man can say this always while under chastening; for if the soul is judging itself, there will be often anxiety and sorrow; but the effects are blessed. What we want is that all our thoughts, and ways, and actings of will should be displaced, and that God *should be everything*.

All chastening must have in principle the character of law in it; for it is the Lord dealing with His people in righteousness (as it is said, "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons *judgeth* according to every man's work," etc.), not in the sovereign riches of divine grace. It is God's allowing nothing in the heart inconsistent with that holiness of which the believer has been made partaker. It is indeed most blessed *grace* that takes all the pains with us; but that is not the character it assumes.

What we exceedingly need is intimacy of

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soul with God, resting in quietness in Him, though all be confusion and tumult around us. When the man here had God near his heart, though iniquity abounded, it was only the means of making God's "comforts" known to his soul; as it is said, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul" (v. 19).

Our portion is not only to know the riches of God's grace, but the secret of the Lord, to have intimacy of communion with Him in His holiness. Then, however adverse the circumstances, the soul rests quietly and steadfastly in Him.

If you would have full unhindered peace, and depth of fellowship with God, and one with another; if you would meet circumstances and temptations without being moved thereby, it must flow from this, not merely the knowledge that all things are yours in Christ, but acquaintance with God Himself; as it is said, "Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

May we, through grace enabling, let God have all His way in our hearts.

When once we see the hand of God in our sorrows, we can look for deliverance; because it is God, and His hand is on us in love.

"Fear Not."

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death." (Revelation i. 17-18).

IT is important to notice that the apostle John "was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the *testimony* of Jesus Christ."

Most persons around us now have no objection to the outward forms of religion, and will allow you to hold what doctrines you please, provided you keep them to yourself; but the unrenewed mind still kicks against faithful testimony in life and word to the infinite and glorious perfections of the Person, work, offices, fitness and fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Christians *now* bore distinctly "the testimony of Jesus Christ," we may be sure that it would still be offensive to many; for the offence of the cross has not ceased.

While the persecuted and banished apostle was thus honouring his earth-rejected Master, he was himself marvellously honoured by being chosen, not only to convey the Revelation to the churches, but to have such blessed views of the future as no one was ever privi-

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leged to have before. Accordingly we are told that he was “ *in the Spirit* on the Lord’s day.”

By his being “ *in the Spirit*,” we are to understand that he was not musing or meditating according to the thoughts of the natural mind, but that he was under the guidance, control, and operation of the Holy Spirit. The thoughts of his mind, and the affections of his heart, were according to the workings of the Holy Spirit, the Testifier and Glorifier of Christ.

When in this state the beloved apostle suddenly heard *behind* him a *great voice*, as of a trumpet.” The voice said, “ I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last : and, What thou seest, write in a book,” etc.

No sooner had John looked behind him, than a marvellous vision of Christ and the churches, resplendent with glory and beauty, met his astonished gaze. He saw the churches symbolized by seven golden candlesticks, pure precious, heavenly, fitted to bear light ; and in the midst of the candlesticks he saw the LORD.

Astounding as was the great voice, and beautiful the appearance of the seven candlesticks, it was neither it nor they that overpowered the apostle, but the sight of Christ Himself : “ When I saw HIM, I fell at His feet as dead.” Though John had full assurance that he was born again, that he was a

child of God, that all his sins were purged, that he was in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit, and that as to his eternal portion, he had nothing to fear; yet the vision of the transcendent glory of the ascended Lord was more than he could bear.

He tells us, that the One whom he saw was "like unto the Son of man"; and yet that One declared Himself to be "the First and the Last." In this brief account we find His Person, God and Man, beautifully expressed. Who can be "the First and the Last," but the eternal God? Who is "like unto the Son of man," but He who became in "the likeness of sinful flesh," and "was found in fashion as a man"? (Rom. viii. 3; Phil. ii. 8).

From His being "in the midst of the seven candlesticks," we may gather that He is in spirit with the churches, though personally absent. "His eyes," which, "in the days of His flesh," wept tears of sympathy and pity, now, "as a flame of fire," show us that nothing escapes His observation. He accordingly says to every assembly, "I know thy works."

The "sharp two-edged sword," and "His voice as the sound of many waters," may teach us that He judges and reproves; while the "garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle," may remind us that He is not now mocked with a purple

robe, nor is His sacred side now exposed to the rude soldier's spear; but that He is girded for the exercise of judicial authority.

“His head and His hairs white like wool, as white as snow,” set Him forth as the Ancient of days, the eternal I AM. The “seven stars in His right hand” indicate that He is the source, the upholder, and sovereign controller of all ministry in His Church, which all flows from the hand that was once pierced on Calvary's cross; while “His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,” imply that now all judgment is committed unto Him, that He will tread “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God,” and reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.”

And what can “His countenance as the sun shineth in his strength” set before us, but that He who once condescended to be spit upon and smitten for us, whose visage was “so marred more than any man,” is now the exalted Head of the Church, Head too of all principality and power, and in the full enjoyment of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was?

“When I saw *Him*, I fell at His feet as dead,” writes the beloved apostle; and being thus at his Master's feet, he was in a position to learn still deeper lessons of the Saviour's love. So John goes on to say, “He laid His

right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ! ”

What a blessed manifestation of the compassionate heart of Jesus ! How tender, how gentle, was the touch ! That same right hand that had gotten eternal victory over His servant's enemies was now again put forth on his behalf ; that hand which had been once willingly pierced for his sins was again stretched out for his recovery, at the same time comforting His fainting servant with “ Fear not ” ; as much as to say, John, you have nothing to fear, no ground for discomfort, no warrant for uneasy apprehensions ; for *My* right hand is *for* you, and *not against* you. If He who has all power in heaven and in earth, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Redeemer, and Judge of all, says to us, “ Fear not,” what ground can there be for disquietude ?

But, more than this, the Master will give His fainting servant yet more intelligent reasons for not fearing, because of His Person, His finished work, and His exaltation.

1. HIS PERSON. “ I am the First and the Last.” We have already referred to this. It may be well to add, that true peace must always be connected with right views of the Person of Christ, because it is the dignity and glory of His Person that give efficacy to His work. Take away His manhood, and we have no Substitute, no Redeemer ; take away His

Godhead, and we have no atoning virtue in the blood. The blessedness is, that both God and man are found in Him. Thus He only was fitted for the stupendous work of eternal redemption. He was the Days-man whom the patriarch Job longed for, who has brought in all the blessing man needed, and answered all God's righteous claims. This is another reason why John should “Fear not.”

2. HIS FINISHED WORK. “I am He that liveth, and was dead.” As much as to say, John, I have died for you. I have borne all your sins, and removed all your transgressions from you. I have been into death instead of you, so that you shall never see death. I am alive again; therefore all your debt is cancelled, all just claims upon you as a sinner have been answered by Me; and I am alive again; therefore you must live for ever. “Fear not.”

3. HIS EXALTATION. “Behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” Unless every one of our sins had been purged, God could not have raised Christ from the dead. His resurrection, therefore, is God's public testimony that sin has been condemned, and for ever put away; and the risen Lord being exalted to the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour, appointed a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, invested with all power, and

having all judgment committed to Him, are abundant proofs of the acceptance and security of all believers. And as to death and the grave, who holds the keys? Did not Jesus say to His servant, lying low at His feet, "I have the keys of hell and of death"?

What a comforting truth this is to the child of God! How impossible that one can sleep in death, or be laid in the grave, till Jesus unlocks the gates! and we may be assured He will open the gates for His loved ones at the best time, and it shall be neither too soon nor too late; neither shall the way be too easy nor too painful.

How wonderfully thus did Jesus provide comfort for His fainting servant at His feet! How sweetly He took away his fears! Oh, Christian reader, if you are almost ready to faint, behold your risen and exalted Saviour! Think of His Person; consider His finished work upon the cross; behold Him triumphing over all your enemies in resurrection; contemplate Him justly exalted in heaven to the highest pinnacle of glory as your life, ever living to make intercession for you, and see Him securely holding the keys of hell and of death.

Precious, glorious, unalterable facts!
