

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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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

## Have you the Spirit ?

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he  
is none of His." (Rom. viii. 9.)

### I.

**H**AVE you the Spirit? is then a question of vital importance; and from this and other scriptures we gather, not only that every child of God has the Spirit of Christ, but that he should know that he has this blessed One dwelling in him. We have repeatedly heard it said, "I know that I have the Spirit of God dwelling in me, because Scripture says so"; but while this is perfectly true, ought it to be enough to satisfy us? Is it possible that God the Holy Ghost can dwell in us without our having some sense of His almighty, ever-living activities in our souls? And are there not many operations of the same Spirit? Are we not also told that "the things of God

knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God " ? (1 Cor. ii. 11.) How important, then, it is to have clear and intelligent thoughts, as revealed in Scripture, as to the Holy Ghost Himself, and His indwelling and operations in us !

In tracing this most blessed subject a little, we may notice first what Scripture says we have not received. We are told we have *not* received " the spirit of the world," which we know only occupies itself with things of earth and time and sense, matters bounded by death on every hand. (1 Cor. ii. 12.) *Nor* have we received the " spirit of fear," that spirit of dread and torment which is ever occupied with painful uncertainties and gloomy forebodings. (2 Tim. i. 7.) *Nor* have we received " the spirit of bondage again to fear," connected with legal observances and ritual ceremonials, which never can deliver from the fear of death. (Rom. viii. 15.) But we are distinctly told that we *have* received " the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God " ; that we *have* received " the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind " ; and that " we *have* received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." All therefore of the workings within, of the love of the world and of bondage, legal fears and dreadful apprehensions, are not of the Spirit of God. Nor can that Holy Spirit produce thoughts in us for the dishonour of the Lord Jesus ; for " no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) We have in this way the ground cleared as to what the Spirit of God doth not produce in us ; and also of the love, liberty, and conscious relationships He gives us to enjoy.

## HAVE YOU THE SPIRIT?

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And further we are told that “the love of God is *shed* abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”; thus producing in us a happy sense of our being objects of divine love. (Rom. v. 5.) And as to intelligence, we now know what prophets declared they did not know. If a prophet said, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,” an apostle replies, “But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.) Thus we see at once the actions of the Spirit, both in the heart and in the mind, according as it is written, “I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Heb. x. 16.)

But the important question may be asked by some, What do you mean by having the Spirit of Christ? This expression is used only once more in Scripture, as far as I remember, and then in reference to the Old Testament prophets, who, by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow. (1 Peter i. 11.) Elsewhere the prophets are said to have spoken by the Holy Ghost. By the Spirit of Christ, then, we are now to understand the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter which Jesus promised to send after His departure out of this world, and which, we are also told, could not be given till Jesus was glorified. And so important was the coming down of the Holy Ghost, that the disciples were told to tarry in Jerusalem for Him. And after Jesus had been raised from the dead, and had been

seen of His disciples forty days, He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, for they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts i. 5.) Now observe, they were not thus put to wait for the new birth, or to be made God's children, for that they were already; nay, more, they had received risen life too, for so I understand, when Jesus breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," that life in the Spirit, risen life, was then communicated; but they were waiting for the Holy Ghost Himself, to indwell them, and unite them to their glorified Head in heaven in the membership of His body.

It was, then, after Jesus had gone into heaven with His own blood, having set us there before God as cleansed and justified by His blood, that the Holy Ghost came down, and took up His abode for ever in such as were cleansed. First, made sons by being born of God, and cleansed from all sin, and then, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son in your hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." These two operations, namely (1) the new birth by the Spirit, and (2) the subsequent in-dwelling of the Spirit, are clearly distinct, and the latter succeeds the former; that is, the Holy Ghost indwells those who are born of God.

Observe also, it is not an emanation of the Spirit merely that is given. Scripture is quite plain as to this. It is "the Comforter" which is "the Holy Ghost." Nor do we read of our having the Spirit merely in the way of *influence*, though He does influence our hearts, and minds, and consciences. The idea of an influence sets aside the reality of His indwelling, and makes us



think of one outside us, acting upon us like the sun in the heavens sheds his genial rays upon us, rather than the fact of His being *in* us. Such thoughts also obscure the glory of His divine person, and deprive souls of the happy enjoyment of His presence and operations. When one looks only at Scripture it is unaccountable how Christians should be praying *for* the Spirit, and for His influences, as if He had not come.

Before the day of Pentecost it was well enough to *pray* for the Spirit, and to look for His coming; hence, in the Gospels, our blessed Lord said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke xi. 13) But since He has come, there is no such idea in Scripture as that of Christians praying for the Spirit; but, on the contrary, in the epistles, there is the constant recognition of the fact that He is here.

To pray *to* the Spirit, as some insist on, is far more excusable, because the Holy Ghost is God; but even doing this betrays ignorance of the order of Scripture teaching; for the Spirit being the power of prayer, and the One who teaches us how to pray and what to pray for, who makes intercession for the saints according to God, we are spoken of as praying *in* the Spirit instead of *to* the Spirit.

But to pray for a *fresh baptism* of the Spirit is wholly unscriptural, and entirely without excuse. In Acts i. the saints were instructed to wait to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. In Acts ii. the Holy Ghost came down and filled them. In 1 Cor. xii. 13 we are told, that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Baptism of the Spirit

is clearly then the Holy Ghost indwelling God's children, and connecting them in the unity of one body with Christ, their glorified Head in heaven. If, then, believers are once for all united to Christ in glory by the Holy Ghost, how can this be redone? What meaning therefore can be attached to the expression so common among many Christians, of praying for "a fresh baptism of the Spirit"? It is very sad.

Again, we sometimes hear, from those too of whom we should least expect it, of our having received only "a measure of the Spirit." But where does Scripture say this? Where do you find it? It is said that "the Father giveth *not* the Spirit by measure"; "unto him" is in italics and therefore not in the original. (See John iii. 34.) And if one only thinks of it for a moment, it becomes apparent that if it is only a measure of the Spirit we have received, then the Holy Ghost Himself has not come. It is also thought that the idea of our having the Spirit only in measure is strengthened by the expression in Ephesians v., "Be filled with the Spirit," because they suppose to be filled with the Spirit is to have a greater measure. Such, however, is not the case. The apostle there puts it in the form of an exhortation or command, saying, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." That is, do not feed on that which excites the flesh, do not strengthen it, for that grieves and hinders the Spirit's working in us; as Peter says, "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." (1 Pet. ii. 11.) "Be not then drunk with wine, wherein is excess"; or do not strengthen, but abstain from fleshly lusts, but "be filled with the Spirit." Or, so let that which is

carnal be reckoned dead by you, that the Spirit may be ungrieved, unhindered, so that He may fill every faculty of your heart and mind. Thus to "be filled with the Spirit" is not having more of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God, who indwells you, so ungrieved as to *fill* all your mind and heart with Christ.

But all these mistakes about the Holy Ghost arise from not knowing Him. "Ye know Him," said our blessed Lord, "for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John xiv. 17.) The eternal Godhead of the Holy Ghost is plainly and abundantly set forth in Scripture, and the attributes and sovereign actings of God are ascribed to Him. He is called "the eternal Spirit." (Heb. ix. 14.) The psalmist speaks of His omnipresence, saying, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?" (Ps. cxxxix. 7.) The apostle Paul alludes to His omniscience in these words, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (2 Cor. ii. 10.) In Acts v. He is called God. In the third verse Peter charges Ananias with lying to the Holy Ghost; and in the next verse says to him, "Thou has not lied unto men, but unto God." The sovereign actings of the Holy Ghost are seen in Acts xiii. 2, in saying, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"; and in chap. xvi. 6 He forbids them to preach the word in Asia. And when they essayed to go into Bithynia, we are told that "the Spirit suffered them not." Thus we see that the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church is called God; and we also see His sovereign actings with the servants of the Lord in regard to their work. We have noticed also some of His divine attributes. Who else but God could thus act?

His *personality* also calls for a few words; for though He is God the Holy Ghost, He is not God the Father, nor God the Son; and yet these three are One. Though the Father and the Son are One in divine essence, so that Jesus could say, "I and my Father are One," yet in person they are distinct. Hence we read that the Father sent the Son, that "when the fulness of time was come God sent forth His Son." (1 John iv. 14; Gal. iv. 4.) And so of the Holy Ghost Jesus said, "Whom the *Father will send* in my name" (John xiv. 26); and again, "Whom *I will send* unto you from the Father" (John xv. 26); and further, "If I go not away, the *Comforter will not come* unto you." (John xvi. 7.) His personal actings also were referred to by our Lord as in the following words: "*He shall teach you all things. He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. He shall testify of me. He shall guide you into all truth. He shall glorify me: and shall receive of mine, and show unto you.*" (John xiv., xv., xvi.) What language could more plainly convey to our minds the reality of *personal* actings? And who, I would ask, but One who was God, could teach "all things," and guide into "all truth"? It is "He," "He," "He," all through. Thus the Godhead and personality of the Holy Ghost are plainly taught in the word of God. Let these precious truths be solemnly pondered by us.

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There is a positive joy in pleasing God.

## Reflections on the Book of Jonah.

### I.

**O**UR moral corruption is very deep. It is complete. But at times it will betray itself in very repulsive shapes, from which, with all the knowledge of it which we have, we instinctively shrink, confounded at the thought that they belong to us.

Privileges under God's own hand may only serve to develop instead of curing this corruption.

The love of distinction was inlaid in us at the very outset of our apostasy. "Ye shall be as gods," was listened to. To this lust, this love of distinction, we will, in cold blood, sacrifice all that may stand in our way, without respect, as it were, to sex or age, as at the beginning we sacrificed the Lord Himself to it. (Gen. iii.)

We take God's gifts, and deck ourselves with them. The church at Corinth was such a one as that. Instead of using God's gifts for others, the brethren there were displaying them. But the man who had the mind of Christ, in the midst of them would say, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." (1 Cor. xiv. 19.)

The Jew, the favoured, privileged Jew, grievously sinned in this way. Romans ii. convicted him on this ground. His separation from the nations was of God; but instead of using this as witness to the holiness of God, in the midst of a revolted world's pollutions, he took occasion to exalt himself by it. He boasted in God and in the

law; but he dishonoured God by breaking the law.

Now, Jonah was of the nation of Israel, and among the prophets of God. He was thus doubly privileged. But nature is quick in him to take advantage of this, and to serve her own fond ends by this. Yea, and Jonah was a saint of God also; but this alone, under pressure and temptation of the flesh, does not secure victory over nature.

As a prophet, the Lord sends him with a word against Nineveh; a word of judgment. But he knew, when he received it, that in the bosom of Him who was sending him,\* mercy was rejoicing; and he reckoned, therefore, that His word, which was to speak of judgment, would be set aside by the grace that abounded in Him. (iv. 2.)

Was he prepared for this? Could he, a Jew, suffer it, that a Gentile city should be favoured, and share the mercy and salvation of God? Could he, a prophet, suffer it, that his word would fall to the ground, and that, too, in the presence of the uncircumcised? This was too much. He goes on board a ship bound for Tarshish, instead of crossing the country to Nineveh. But surely, when we look at him under such conditions, we may say, It is a proud apostate, another Adam, that is now in the merchant-ship on the waters of the Mediterranean. He was a transgressor, like Adam; a transgressor through pride, like Adam; and, like Adam, he must take the sentence of death into himself.

Simple, sure, and yet solemn, all this!

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\* 2 Kings xiv. had given Jonah proof of this.

To accept the punishment of our sin is the first duty of an erring soul. We are not to seek to right ourselves by an effort of our own, when we have gone wrong, lest Hormah be our portion. (Num. xiv.) Our first duty is to accept, in the spirit of confession, the punishment of our sin, to be humbled under the mighty or chastening hand of God. (Lev. xxvi. 41.) David did this, and the kingdom was his again. Jonah now does the same. "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea," said he to the mariners, in the midst of the tempest; "so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you."

And they did so, but with a grace that might well shame their betters, which bespeaks the hand of God *with* them, as it was *against* Jonah. And Jonah is soon wrapped among the weeds of the sea, down in "the bottoms of the mountains" there. (ii. 6).

Could Gentile Nineveh be in a worse plight? Was not Jonah's circumcision as uncircumcision? A Jew and a prophet in the depths of the sea, with the weeds wrapped about his head, because of the displeasure of Jehovah! Surely, such a one in such a state may well cease his boastings, and no longer despise others. Could anyone be well lower? Proud Adam was behind the trees of the garden; proud Jonah is in the bottom of the sea.

The Lord by no means clears the guilty. "The Judge of all the earth" does right. (Gen. xviii. 25.) But grace brings salvation. (Titus ii. 11.) And this very soon, and it will be only Jonah's *sin* that shall be in the bottom of the sea, Jonah himself being delivered, as his first father, Adam,

left his guilt and his covert behind him, and returned to the presence of God.

But Jonah was *taught* as well as *delivered*. In the belly of the fish he finds out that, Jew as he was, he stood in need of "the salvation of God," just as much as any Gentile could need it. Uncircumcised Nineveh had been unclean and despised in his eyes, and he grudged her God's mercy. What would become of himself now but for that mercy? He was in prison, and he deserved to be there. What could do for him, what reach his condition, but mercy, free, full, and sovereign? "Salvation is of the Lord," he has to say. (ii. 9.) It is not in himself as a privileged Jew, or as a gifted prophet, that he will now rejoice, but only in Him to whom it belongs to bring salvation.

And then the exulting question arises, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yea, of the Gentiles also." (Rom. iii. 29). Our need of salvation, our dependence on the sovereignty and grace of God, equalizes us all. "It is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." (Rom. iii. 30.) The Jew must come in on the very same mercy that saves the Gentile. (Rom. xi. 30-31.) Jonah must be as Nineveh. This is the lesson the whale's belly taught Jonah, the Jew.

Let Nineveh be what it may, Gentile and uncircumcised, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, or anything else, it could not stand more in need of "the salvation of God" than the favoured Jew and the privileged, gifted prophet at that moment did, being as in hell for his transgression. It was all over with him, but for that.



## ON THE BOOK OF JONAH.

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But *that* he gets, and the fish cast him up on the dry land, when he had learnt, and confessed, and declared, "Salvation is of the Lord." (ii. 9.)

He was a sign to the Ninevites. His nation by and by will have the like lesson. No sign is now left with them but that of this prophet; and they will have to find out as from the belly of hell, or as from under the judgment of God (where now as a nation they are lying), that grace, and the redemption it works, is their only place and their only refuge.

But this salvation of God, in which Jonah is called to rejoice, gets all its authority, we know, from the mystery of the Cross; because One who could do so, for us sinners, went down under the dominion of death, under the judgment of sin, and of whom in that condition, as in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, Jonah himself in the belly of the fish for the like time, is made the type.

And when we think of this, we may say, Scripture may magnify its office, as the apostle of the Gentiles does his. It has to reveal God and His counsels; and surely it does this in marvellous and fruitful wisdom, delivering forth, as here, pieces of history for our instruction, but at the same time making that history deliver forth samples, and pledges, and foreshadowings of further and richer secrets for our more abundant instruction.

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The root and essence of personal piety  
is the soul's own desire after God.

## **A few Words on the First Epistle of John.**

### III.

**S**O again, a second time, as to love. Love is perceived or manifested in the Lord Jesus laying down His life for us. If we shut up our compassions from one another, that love does not dwell in us. We can have had no fellowship with it (iii. 16, 17; iv. 9-11.)

And further still as to love. It is a perfect love which has been displayed; communion with it, therefore, believing, intelligent apprehension of it, will beget full assurance in the soul, and cast out all fear (iv. 17-19).

Surely I do not say too much when I say, after all this, that this blessed epistle gives us various manifestations of God in Christ, "the Word of life," and that such manifestations leave their impressions on the souls that have communion with them.

And this same thing, the power of communion with manifestations to leave impressions on the soul, is incidentally contemplated in two interesting instances.

1. We are to *like* Jesus in glory, when He is *manifested* in glory, because we shall *see* Him in that glory (iii. 2).

2. We are liars, if we say that we love God, while we are hating our brother. Such things cannot be. Our brother has been seen; God has not been seen. Therefore, on the principle of the epistle, on the principle that communion with things manifested leaves impressions behind it, we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if

we love not our brother whom we have seen (iv. 20, 21).

These passages strikingly affirm the general principle.

But there is true blessing from all this. It takes us into real, vital, personal knowledge of the Blessed One. And supposing that these impressions of which we speak are but faintly and partially produced in the soul (and surely we know too well that such is the case) we know where to charge the mischief; that is, on the imperfectness of our communion with the object, and not on the object or manifestation itself.

And that discovery is our blessing; for God is true to us. It is we who are false to ourselves. The manifestations made of God to us should produce, as this epistle tells us, joy, light, love, holiness, assurance of heart. If, then, we find that all this precious fruit is but partially ripened in our souls, we charge this on the poverty of our communion with our object, and not on the manifestation He has made of Himself. That manifestation is such as would secure all these virtues in us in full measure. We find out that we are not straitened in Him, but in our own bowels. And surely this is precious. The reflection in us is faint; but the light that has awakened it is unclouded.

The way, however, to deepen these impressions is still to be occupied with the manifestation. We are not to be too carefully turning over the shame and grief of this faintness before the conscience, but to be returning, so to speak, again and again, to the object. And with this judgment the Spirit in the apostle seems to concur when He says, "These things have I written unto you, that

believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and *that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God*" (v. 13). Let the Son of God be still the object of your faith.

I would say a little further on this epistle. In v. 18-21 the apostle gives us three results, and then closes his letter. We get in these verses three "We knows," leading forth three distinct though connected truths, each of them weighty, solemn, and precious.

1. He that is born of God sinneth not, but keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not (v. 18).

Such doctrine had been considered in some of the previous parts of the epistle. The Son of God had been declared to have been manifested to take away our sin and to have no sin in Himself (iii. 5); such words teaching us that the life imparted to us by the Son is a clean life, a life according to God in righteousness and holiness. The fountain of it is Himself, without touch or stain of sin; and that which flows from Him in us is of like quality. The same fountain cannot send forth both salt water and fresh. The nature that sins, that yields sin as its fruit, can have no communion with Him. What fellowship has light with darkness? Neither can "the wicked one," the source of the unclean nature, touch that which is born of God, or derived from the Son, as is here taught us. He cannot come in to defile it, as he defiled Adam.

And this is very blessed. It intimates a condition gloriously beyond that of Adam.

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and that which was written was upright, even words  
of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10).

## Have you the Spirit ?

### II.

**H**IS operations occupy a large place in Scripture. From Genesis onward His actings are constantly seen. At Creation He "moved upon the face of the waters." In the wilderness He endowed Bezaleel with wisdom to make various parts of the tabernacle and furniture, so as to typify the person and work of the Lord Jesus. The anointing oil in figure set Him forth. He came upon prophets, to enable them to speak and write the words of God, to set forth the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which follow; and He loosed the tongues of men and women to praise and magnify Jehovah at the birth of the Son of God, who had been conceived of the Holy Ghost. He came upon Jesus, the perfect One, in bodily shape as a dove, when

the Father's testimony of Him was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 17.) It was by the eternal Spirit that Jesus offered Himself without spot to God; and after His death and burial He was quickened by the Spirit. The same Holy Ghost came down to form and indwell the assembly of God at Pentecost, and has been here ever since as the other Comforter to abide with us for ever; and He is the power of all blessing.

With regard to His present operations, Scripture speaks of them as both individual and collective; for He dwells in the Church as well as in believers individually. (See Eph. ii. 22; 1 Cor. ii. 16; and also 1 Cor. vi. 19.) On these subjects the instruction is large and varied, a knowledge of which is of the highest importance for our soul's comfort and blessing. But as the scripture we are considering looks at the individual as possessing the Spirit, our remarks must for the present be confined to this point.

1. We are distinctly taught in Scripture, that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*." (2 Cor. iii. 17). As we have before seen, He does not bring us into bondage or servile fear, but sets our souls in the enjoyment of the liberty where-with Christ has made us free, and points us to Him now seated in the heavenlies, as being there because He did by His one offering perfect for ever them that are sanctified. Hence we sing,

"Our doubts and fears for ever gone,  
For Christ is on the Father's throne."

2. It is by the Holy Ghost who is given to us that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

(Rom. v. 5.) Thus we are not merely informed of the truth intellectually, but are given a feeling sense, an enjoyment of the fact that we are objects of divine love. Our hearts are melted with God's love, and we can say with the apostle, "We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.)

3. The Holy Ghost being given to us as "the Spirit of adoption" after we were born of God, filial feelings are produced in us, so that we love God as our Father, and our fellow-believers as brethren. The Spirit, no doubt by the truth, bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God, and gives us also access through Jesus unto the Father. (Rom. viii. 16; Eph. ii. 18.) Thus we can in some measure even now enter into these precious words of Jesus, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John xx. 17.) This marvellous relationship we know by the Spirit dwelling in us, which causes our hearts to rise up in worship to the Father, and flow out in love and sympathy to His children.

4. It is also by the Spirit that we can truly know and own Jesus as Lord; for we are told that "no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) It is remarkable in Christendom, while many talk so glibly of "our Saviour," how comparatively rare it is to find a person ready to confess that Jesus is his LORD, the One now owned by him in the place of exaltation and honour; thus demanding both his adoring gratitude and subjection of heart and will.

5. The Holy Ghost is our leader. "As many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.) In gentleness He leads (not drives or coerces) us; but like a nurse leads

her little ones across a path of defilement and danger, so He graciously gives us to hear His still small voice within us saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it." (Isa. xxx. 21.) It is an important fact to notice, that those who are "led of the Spirit" are "not under the law." Happy are they who, in meekness and confidence, wholly and unreservedly commit themselves to His sure guidance !

6. The Holy Ghost strengthens the new nature ; hence the apostle prays that we may be "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." (Eph. iii. 16.) But He dwells in our bodies and in our hearts. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 6.)

7. "The fruit of the Spirit" stands in wide contrast with "the works of the flesh." It is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance : against such there is no law." (Gal. v. 22, 23.)

8. The Holy Ghost is our teacher ; He guides into all truth. God has now revealed precious mysteries by His Spirit ; "for the Spirit searcheth all things ; yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. ii. 10.) Jesus said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John xiv. 26.) What a precious Teacher ! How astonishing that we do not more implicitly, and more habitually, yield ourselves to be taught by Him ! Perhaps nothing shows more what self-confidence lurks in us than our shortcoming as to this.

9. The Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us is the



other Comforter, the Paraclete, the One who manages everything in us, even as Jesus is the Advocate, or Paraclete, above, and manages everything for us up there. We are filled with joy in the Holy Ghost, we abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost, and are taught to cry, "Come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. xxii. 20.) It is by His gracious ministry that the word which testifies of Christ is often brought to remembrance so suitably to our heart's need, that we are comforted when cast down, or gently reprov'd when inclining to that which is evil in His sight. It is by His effectual working that the personal glories, accomplished redemption, triumphant work, fitness and fulness of Christ, are brought home to our souls for comfort and blessing. He is the power of our fellowship with the Father and His Son, and the helper of our infirmities in prayer. He is ever attracting us to Christ, drawing us up to where He is, and setting our minds on things above. He glorifies Christ, and takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us, and teaches us as to ourselves that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no good. He is always associating our souls with Christ; as another has written,

"He never leads a man to say,  
'Thank God, I'm made so good,'  
But turns his eye another way,  
To Jesus and His blood."

10. It is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us who is *the power of all ministry*. When, through the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus, we drink in the blessed satisfaction, enjoyment, and rest that He gives to needy, thirsty souls, and it sinks down in deep reality in us, then it gushes forth from us in blessing to others; as Jesus said, "If any

man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John vii. 37-39.) Thus in the early part of John's Gospel we have the three great actions of the Spirit set forth. In the third chapter, the new birth, or being born of the Spirit; in the fourth chapter, what it is to be indwelt by the Spirit, who is always drawing the heart upward: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (vv. 13, 14.) Then, as we have just seen, in the seventh chapter, the action of the Holy Ghost flowing out in blessing to those around from deeply felt power of Christ's preciousness. But it is important to observe that each of these operations is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ.

11. The Holy Ghost is also the One by whom we are *sealed* unto the day of redemption. He is the *earnest*, until we come into the actual possession of the inheritance, and the *anointing* or spiritual power whereby we are fitted to live according to the Lord's mind: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." (Eph. i. 13, 14.) "Ye *have an unction* from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (1 John ii. 20.) Besides these, there are many more operations of the Holy Ghost

the Comforter, who has come down to dwell in us; and it is well to see that He is in us, and is to abide with us for ever. Many a timid soul says, "I am afraid I shall so grieve Him that He will depart from me." But Scripture says quite the reverse. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv. 30.) But they say, "Then why did David so fear this that he cried out, 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me'?" But it is certain that David never had the Spirit dwelling *in him as we have*; and if he only knew what it was to have the Spirit coming upon him, and moving him now and then to prophesy, etc., no wonder that he so ardently cried out, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." It is, however, sufficient to show that the teaching of the epistles is not, Do not grieve Him, lest He depart; but, Do not grieve Him, because He will not depart, but will abide with you for ever. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv. 30.)

12. But there is a point that ought not to be overlooked. It is this. Our Lord assured His disciples that when the Holy Ghost came they would know three things, namely, (1) the personal glory of Jesus as in the Father, and (2) also that we are in Christ, and (3) that He is in us. And about these precious realities there would be no doubt, when the Holy Ghost came. "In that day ye shall *know* that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John xiv. 20.) The importance of this divine statement cannot be overrated, for it shows the character of spiritual intelligence that every believer should now possess. And no doubt these precious facts would be both known and

enjoyed, if believers were more simply deriving their information from God's word, instead of from the teachings and traditions of men. Alas ! how many souls are doubting their salvation, instead of enjoying by faith the blessed realities of their being in Christ, accepted in Him, complete in Him, made the righteousness of God in Him ! One thing, however, is certain, that the Holy Ghost teaches all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that we *have* redemption in Christ, and through His blood ; that we *are* children of God, and not under the law ; that we *are* in Christ, and that He is in us.

Enough has been said to show that those who have known a power outside flesh and blood bringing them as sinners to Jesus as Saviour, who know Jesus in the heavens to be Lord, who have God's love in their hearts, who are conscious of having life, a new life in Christ, who enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and who realize that One is teaching, guiding, leading them into God's truth, and obedience to it, for His glory, *have the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ.* Oh ! the depth of the riches of the grace of God to us !

“ What moved Thee to impart  
 Thy Spirit from above,  
 Therewith to fill our heart  
 With heavenly peace and love ?  
 'Twas love, unbounded love to us,  
 Moved Thee to give Thy Spirit thus.”

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When the Church is in glory, it will  
 not lose the character of grace.

## Reflections on the Book of Jonah.

### II.

**J**ONAH, as a sign, suits both the Lord Himself and Israel as a nation, as the Gospels let us know. Israel must go through death and resurrection. Their iniquity is not to be purged till they die. (Isaiah xxii.) All Scripture affirms this. The valley of dry bones illustrates it. (Ezek. xxxviii.) But they will be as a risen people in the day of the kingdom, all thanks and praise to the death and resurrection of the Son of God for this and every blessing! And Jonah's death and resurrection, as I may again say, applies significantly or typically to the history of his nation, and to the history of his Saviour. (Matt. xii. 40; Luke xi. 29-30.) Jonah's sin, too, was the expression of the nation's. He and they have alike refused the thought of mercy to the Gentiles. (1 Thess. ii. 16.) When Paul began to speak of God's mercy to the Gentiles, the Jews would listen to him no longer. (Acts xxii. 21-22.)

The story of our prophet is thus a fruitful one. True as a narrative, it is significant as a parable; and all of us, the elect of God as well as Israel, may in our way take our place with him, as dead and risen, the only character that can be ours as saved sinners.

Returning, however, to the history itself, we may now observe that as one that had been thus taught, taught his need of God's grace, Jonah is sent on a second message to Nineveh. He goes, and with words of judgment on his lips, he enters that great city, that Nimrod-city, the

representation in that day of the pride and daring of a revolted world. "Within forty days," he proclaims as a herald, "and Nineveh shall be destroyed."

Thus he "mourned." It was his commission. Responsively, Nineveh "lamented." The king rose from his throne, and all the nation put themselves in sackcloth; and in such condition, as humbled under the hand of God, a king of Nineveh shall find the Lord as a king of Israel had before found Him. "I said," says David, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Ps. xxxii. 5.) "Who can tell," says this royal Gentile, "if God will turn, and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" And so it was. "God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not."

"Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not of the Gentiles also?" again I ask, with the apostle, and with him again I answer, "Yes, of the Gentiles also." Grace is divine. Government may know a people, and order them as such; grace knows sinners just as they are, wherever, wherever. The earth has its arrangements, but heaven holds its court in sovereignty. Nineveh, like Jerusalem, is spared; the hand of the destroying angel is stayed over the one city as well as over the other. (1 Chron. xxi.; Jonah iii.)

But "tell it not in Gath." Let not the daughters of the Philistines hear of Jonah the Jew in the fourth chapter!

Did Lot go a second time to Sodom? Did Hezekiah, after the going back of the shadow

upon the sun-dial, sin through pride, with the ambassadors of Babylon? Did Josiah, after his humbling and tenderness, go wilfully to the battle against the king of Egypt? Did Peter, in spite of warnings from his Lord, deny his Lord? Have you and I, beloved, forgotten lessons-learnt, and correctings endured? And is Jonah now to be unmindful of the whale's belly? It is a passing wonder; a lesson so sealed, so stamped, so engraven, apparently, and yet so quickly lost to the soul!

Jonah is displeased. The mercy shown to Nineveh had made a Gentile important to the God of heaven and earth; and this was too much for the Jew. The word of a prophet had suffered wrong, as pride suggested, at the hand of the God of mercy. Jonah was very angry. He cannot exactly again take ship, and go to Tarshish; but, in the spirit of him who lately did so, he goes outside the city, and he says, "O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish; for I know that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil. Therefore, now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

What naughtiness of heart all this was! Was he preparing another whale's belly for himself? He well deserved it. What troubles we make for ourselves! Why did not Lot remain in the holy, peaceful tent of Abraham? And why did he prepare for himself a first and second furnace in Sodom? Why did David bring a sword upon his house, which was commissioned of the Lord?

to hang over it unsheathed to the day of his death? "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. xi. 32.) The Lord's voice crieth to the city, and the man of wisdom shall hear; but Jonah was deaf. He has forgotten the lesson of the fish's belly, and he must now be put to learn the lesson of the withered gourd.

Outside the city, Jonah prepares a booth for himself, that he may sit under it, in his moody, bad temper, angry as he was with the Lord. The Lord then prepares a gourd to overshadow Jonah in his booth, and Jonah is very glad because of the gourd. But then the Lord prepares a worm that eats and withers up the gourd; and, the sun and the east wind beating on the unsheltered head of Jonah, he is exceedingly angry, and wishes in himself to die.

The Lord then, in marvellous gentleness, turns all these simple circumstances into a page of the profoundest and most affecting instruction. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

The prophet's delight in the gourd is but the faint reflection of the Lord's delight in the mercy



that visits the creatures of His hand, be they whom they may; at Nineveh, at Jerusalem, or elsewhere, it matters not. And if Jonah would fain have the gourd spared, he must allow repentant Nineveh to be spared. Out of his own mouth he shall be judged; Jonah shall witness for the Lord against himself.

It is indeed a precious and an excellent word. Jonah had been sent down to learn the grace of God in one character of it, and now has he been taught it in another; namely, his need of it, and God's delight in it. The whale's belly, the belly of hell, where he once was, had taught him his own need of "salvation," in that sovereignty of it, in that magnificent height and depth of it, that could stretch as from the throne of power in the highest heavens down to the bottom of the seas in the lowest, to deliver a captive there under the righteous judgment of God. The withered gourd now teaches him (as all the parables in Luke xv. have also taught us), how the blessed Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Lord of the cattle on a thousand hills, whether in Assyria or Judea, delights in His creatures, the works of His hands, finding His rest and refreshment in the mercy that spares them, when they repent, and turn to Him. (Ps. l. 10.)

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It is exactly he who has the deepest sense of his responsibility who will the most deeply feel his entire dependence upon grace.

## **A few Words on the First Epistle of John.**

### IV.

**A**LL Adam's estates and possessions were exposed to the attempts of "the wicked one." The Serpent was no trespasser in the garden of Eden. He had title to be there, so that Adam might be assayed. But it is otherwise with us. We carry a life, and are heirs of an inheritance, that is not thus exposed. Both our life and our inheritance, all our estate in Christ, and through Christ, are drawn from Christ in victory over him. The Serpent is not seen in the city, as he is in the garden (Rev. xxi., Gen. iii.) "The tree of life" is there, but not "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

2. We are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one. (v. 19).

Such doctrine had also been previously treated of in the epistle. It had been declared that all that was in the world was of the world, and that the enemy of God was the one that was quickening the world as its indwelling energy (ii. 16, iv. 4). There were thus two distinct scenes of action, and two distinct principles of action. There was God in the saints, and there was the wicked one in the world. The saints were of God; all besides were of the world. The one had the renewed faculty of the flock of God, to hear the Shepherd's voice; all besides had taste and intelligence only for the interests and delights of a system which their own hearts and hands, corrupted and occupied by Satan, had fashioned and were sustaining every day (iv. 1-6).

This is a proposition of an awful character. It teaches us that there is no belonging to God among men, but by being drawn out of the world by Jesus. The world may have its varieties and measures; but it is all in the wicked one. All is but varied darkness and enmity. No deliverance is possible, no translation into light, no return to God is possible, but by the way of Jesus, that manifested Life, which this epistle had declared.

3. The Son of God has come to give us an understanding to know Him that is true, and we are in Him, and have the true God, and, in Him and with Him, eternal life. (v. 20.)

This likewise is doctrine of wondrous value. The world by wisdom had not found out God. (1 Cor. i. 21.) All their learning had left them ignorant of God. The altar at Athens witnesses this. (Acts xvii. 23.) But God had now revealed Himself, and that revelation was in Jesus. The glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) This epistle had already taught us this, that the eternal life that was with the Father had been manifested. The apostles had seen, and heard, and handled it. So that knowledge of God was now secured to us. We have been given an understanding to know Him; and we find this knowledge to be eternal life, as this epistle had likewise already said, "He that hath the Son hath life," and had shown the various fruits of being in the knowledge of, or fellowship with, this revealed God.

All thoughts of our own, all conjectures of our own about God, can but make idols or false deities. We are to keep ourselves from all such. WE ARE TO KNOW GOD ONLY IN THIS MANIFESTATION OF HIMSELF WHICH WE GET AND HAVE IN

JESUS, AND WE ARE TO TREAT ALL OTHER THOUGHTS OF HIM AS IDOLATROUS. This only is "the true God," and we are to keep ourselves from all besides as from "idols."

Thus we have three distinct, weighty propositions. Solemn, interesting, blessed conclusions they are. The saints have knowledge of God, and life in that knowledge; and thus they are separated from a world which the wicked one owns and animates, and are in possession of that which that same wicked one can never touch. And the whole closes with that warning already referred to, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

The true God being now revealed, let no thought of God, no reasoning about Him, no conclusions of our own wisdom or theology, arise independently in the heart. All this will but end in idolatry; refined it may be, speculative and philosophic, but still idolatry. The notions of man about Him must be false; for by wisdom we cannot know Him. God has been pleased to manifest Himself, and with that manifestation we are to have communion, and by the light of it to walk apart from all idols; ever esteeming it our blessedness that we are not left to our conjectures about God, but are called to know Him in the light of His own revelation of Himself, and in that knowledge find our life secured to us eternally.

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# 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).

## The Stepless Altar.

READ EXODUS XX. 22-26.

**B**ROUGHT out of Egypt, borne on eagles' wings, led to Mount Sinai, permitted to hear the voice of God speaking to them (a privilege accorded to no other people before or since), the children of Israel were made to feel, and were continually to be reminded, that, though separated from all the earth to be a people for Jehovah, they were nevertheless unfit for the presence of their God.

Before they could be permitted to hear His voice on that awful day at Mount Sinai, they had to sanctify themselves for two days, and on the third day to be brought to the mount. Their clothes were to be washed, and they themselves to be ready; yet they were not fit to be where God was on Sinai. Bounds were set to sanctify it, to

mark it off as ground on which Israel could not tread. They might come to it, but not ascend it, nor touch it. (Exod. xix. 13.) Sanctified they were, according to God's commands; yet Mount Sinai was no place for them. GOD WAS THERE. Moreover, the priests were not allowed to ascend it, though sanctified, it would seem, in a more special manner than the people. (Exod. xix. 22.)

Such were God's directions regarding them, which fully accorded with their own feelings, so that even what He permitted them, namely, to come to the mount, they could not do; for we read that they were afraid because of the fire, and went not up to the mount. (Exod. xix. 13; Deut. v. 5.) They stood under it to hear the law, and then moved afar off. Their conscience told them only too plainly how unfit they were for His presence, and this after strict obedience in sanctifying themselves according to His revealed will. Nothing, then, they could do could alter their moral condition before Him. Nothing they could do could give them confidence to stand before Him. Circumcision they had submitted to. (Josh. v. 5.) Sanctification of the flesh they had conformed to; but God's immediate presence they felt was no place for them.

Yet He was their God, who had redeemed them. They were His people in a peculiar sense. He had shown His favour to them as He had to no other nation. Dividing the Red Sea, He had brought them through it. In the wilderness He had guided their feet. He fed them; He gave them water; He made them triumph over Amalek; He was leading them to Canaan; yet there was a moral barrier between Him and them which they could not pass over or break down, do what they

might. They were sinful and unclean. He was holy. And this, the lesson they learn in the third month after they came out of Egypt, was the same they were to be continually reminded of, till the ground should be laid by God in grace for man to come before Him in boldness, having no more conscience of sins. (Heb. x. 2, 19.)

God immediately provided for this in the ordinance of the altar of earth, and the ascent or way by which to approach it. If they built an altar, such was God's gracious provision for the willing and thankful heart of any of His people (for this ordinance concerned all the people, and not the sons of Aaron only), they might offer thereon for His acceptance burnt-offerings and peace-offerings.

But the altar from which God could accept them must be one that He provided. No artifice of man, no embellishment man could devise, could make it more acceptable to Him, but the very reverse. The altar might be of earth or of stones, but if of the latter, of stones as they found them, not fashioned or graven by any cunning artificer, for that would pollute it at once.

What a lesson was here! The free expression of His people's gratitude God would permit; but man must learn that he could not make an altar of his own devising, or of his own workmanship, suited for God. God must determine beforehand of what it is to be, and how it should be made. The material, too, He would provide. The altar of earth might appear unsightly, the form of the stones might seem capable of improvement; but God would accept no other.

But observe, this altar was not like the brazen altar where sacrifices for sin could be offered up.

It was the altar of a worshipper in a certain relation to God, coming to offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; offerings of sweet savour, the expression of a grateful heart surrendering itself to Him, and feasting with Him. A worshipper, then, such as Israel could be, an *accepted* worshipper, was not only capable of defilement, but had in himself that which could impart it. And all the ceremonies appointed by God, or all the sacrifices offered up by the high priest, could make no change in this, or separate any of the people from that which made them liable to pollute the altar.

And what is this root of defilement but the evil nature, the flesh, sin? When they crossed the Jordan, and erected the altar in Mount Ebal, they lifted up no tool on it. Moses had warned them against it, and they obeyed, (Deut. xxvii. 5-7; Joshua viii. 31.) Though lately circumcised, fresh from victory, and having recently kept the Passover in remembrance of redemption, they were nevertheless reminded that they had in themselves that which would defile. And it mattered not who might build an altar to the Lord, whether the whole congregation of Israel, or individuals, as Gideon, Samuel, Saul, David, Elijah, the ordinance for all was the same. Fallen man has that in him which is polluting.

But, blessed be God, He has now made known how that root of defilement is removed. It is removed by DEATH. Death must take place before we can be accepted by God as freed from that which causes pollution. Death, or the change of the living saints, when the Lord shall come, is the only means by which we can be *actually*, and then *eternally*, freed from sin. By the sacrifice of



## THE STEPLESS ALTAR.

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the Lord Jesus, believers are pardoned, justified, and defilement is atoned for. By His death, too, that which defiles, sin, is put away. For "once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. ix. 26.) And now believers have died to sin. (Rom. vi. 1.) They are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 9.) They are risen with Christ, and seated in Him in the heavenlies. (Eph. ii.) God of His grace has accomplished this. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus, which according to God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth. (2 Cor. v. 17; Eph. v. 24.)

Such we are before Him in Christ; yet in us there is still the flesh, sin. Paul knew it. Believers are conscious of it. The Spirit given to us contends with it, and we cannot be freed from it till death, or the change of the living, takes place. (Gal. v. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 52.) Till then, like Israel of old, we carry it about with us. Yet, unlike them, we know that, before God, we are in Christ holy and without blame. But whilst in this world there is this root of defilement in the greatest saint as in the greatest sinner; yet the difference between them is immense. The saint, by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, is not in the flesh, and has a life apart from sin, undefiling and sinless. The sinner unpardoned is in the flesh, a dead soul before God, communicating defilement, and nothing else, to everything with which he comes in contact.

But there was another lesson that God designed to teach Israel, namely, their nakedness. The first effect from eating of the forbidden tree by Adam and Eve, was to discover they were naked; and the first work they set about was to sew fig

leaves together to make themselves aprons. There is a truth in this discovery which man has attempted to ignore, that he is naked, and needs a covering before he can appear before God. There is a truth made known by their vain attempt to cover themselves which man would fain conceal, that God, not man, must provide what is needful. The worshipper in Israel was reminded of this in the words, "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."

A worshipper he was if he approached the altar, yet his nakedness was not effectually covered. And this, which was true at Sinai, was equally true when they returned, and builded again the tabernacle, after the Babylonish captivity; and when John the Baptist stood in their midst, and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Throughout the dispensation of the old covenant, till that blood had been shed on which the new covenant shall rest, the worshipper in Israel could never know what it was to be effectually covered, his nakedness completely hid. For, be it again remembered, the altar here spoken of is not the brazen altar of the court of the tabernacle, nor the golden altar within the sanctuary. For them God gave a special ordinance, providing their pattern and stating their dimensions. Yet, for no altar, whether in the tabernacle or temple, till God's revelation to Ezekiel (xliii. 17), have we any mention of steps.

This silence is surely significant. It has a voice for all who will hearken. We may be assured that the silence in Exodus xxvii. and xxx. and 2 Chronicles iv., and the special mention of the steps in Ezekiel, are designed to teach something.

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And what is it? That in the Millennium, when the temple is reared, and the priests, the sons of Zadok, are officiating again before the Lord in Jerusalem, and the people are in the enjoyment of their own land once more, resettled there by the God of Israel, the worshipper will be so covered that his nakedness can never be exposed; for what was forbidden in Exodus xx. is expressly sanctioned in Ezekiel xliii. Nothing they could do under the law could effectually hide their nakedness. Nothing that any one can do against them in the Millennium will discover it. (Jeremiah l. 20.)

Till then, with respect to them as a nation, it exists. Then it will be found no longer, and we know why. What discovered man's nakedness but sin? What covers it but the work of Christ when made known to the soul? From the days of Eden till now men have vainly endeavoured to hide it; Adam by his fig leaves, his descendants by their acts, whether of mortification or devotion. But all in vain. "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." (Is. lix. 6.) But God has provided for this. And Israel, after they shall have owned themselves wholly corrupt, all their uprightness proved to be as filthy rags, restored and blessed through the favour of God, and because of that precious blood, the blood of His Son, will know what it is to have their nakedness effectually covered.

But is it only God's ancient people who need a covering for their nakedness? To whom did the Lord address the words, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be

clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear"? (Rev. iii. 18.) Was it not to professing Christians? Then believers now may know, should know, what it is to be covered and clothed. "Holy and without blame before Him in love." "Found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is *through the faith of Christ*, the righteousness which is of God by faith"; "in Christ," "made the righteousness of God in Him." (Eph. i. 4; Phil. iii. 9; Eph. i. 1; 2 Cor. v. 21.)

Here is clothing indeed! Here is a complete covering of all nakedness! What lessons about ourselves does this ordinance concerning the altar teach! What good news about God and the Lord Jesus Christ should it lead the soul to embrace; that which defiles for ever put away, that which sin made us conscious of, for ever covered!

"Clad in this robe, how bright I shine;  
Angels possess not such a dress;  
Angels have not a robe like mine,  
JESUS, the LORD, my righteousness."

---

How blessed to have Jesus! He puts Himself in our place; and we have to do with a God who has manifested Himself in the midst of the world, and who would have us for Himself; but without sin. Having put away our sins, He draws us to Himself; but without sin. Having put away our sins, He draws us to Himself to bring us to enjoy what He is in spite of every obstacle, and of all that is in the flesh. He would have us to enjoy perfectly that God whom, by His grace, we have known as He is.

## Reflections on the Book of Micah.

**T**HIS prophet is mentioned and quoted in Jeremiah xxvi. 18. He was called to be one of the Lord's watchmen, much at the same time as Isaiah; and it was a marked time. The history of things in Judah was taking a peculiar character, and things in Israel were ripening for the sickle of the Assyrian. It was a day in importance only second to the day of the Chaldean; but it was second to that, I grant. For the captivity of Israel, or the removal of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, did not involve the house of God as did that of Judah. The glory was still in the land, though Israel had gone away to the river Gozan. But the Chaldean sacked the city of the king, and spoiled the sanctuary of God; and the glory had to depart when Judah became a captive, and Jerusalem a desolation. (Ezek. x.) And as the prophetic spirit was largely poured out in that day of the Chaldean, as in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and others, so was it now, as in Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, and others.

2 Kings xvii. is an important scripture in connection with Micah. It details the sins of Israel on the ground of which the captivity of the Ten Tribes had come. It gives us an account also of the beginning of that people who in the New Testament are called Samaritans. It shows us their origin as a religious sect, holding truth which the Jews had corrupted by a mixture with the various lies which the heathen conquerors of Israel had brought with them into the land.

As to this little Book of Micah, we may see in it three parts:—

1. The first three chapters give us a gloomy

burden over the *sins and consequent miseries of Israel and Judah*.

2. The next two chapters anticipate the *political or national recovery* of the people.

3. The last two chapters exhibit their *experience, or moral recovery*.

1. The strain begins with anticipations of judgment, especially on Samaria, but not entirely overlooking Jerusalem, and then details the sins which led to this; thus in prophetic style telling us what we may have already read in the historic style, in that chapter referred to, 2 Kings xvii.

Judah had transgressed as well as Israel, and the Assyrian rod, now prepared by the Lord in righteous anger, is raised against Jerusalem as well as Samaria. The day of Ahaz there, had been as the day of Hoshea there. But Hezekiah, who came after Ahaz, did right in the sight of the Lord, and therefore the Lord debated with His rod, and the Assyrian did not prevail over Judah, as he had over Israel.

Such was the condition of things in those days, and Micah spoke as the Lord's watchman. Princes, priests, prophets, and people, are all severally challenged by him, and are all found guilty, and are condemned. That land which had been redeemed out of the hand of the Amorites, and been made the clean vessel among the nations, and the Lord's dwelling-place, has now acquired for itself another character altogether; and now, if there be any ear to hear, any circumcised heart among the people, they are addressed in these words, concerning this land, "Arise, depart, for this is not your rest; because it is polluted." (ii. 10.) Strange and humbling indeed! How has the fine gold become dim!

Waste and desolation are to follow in the train of pollution. But in the midst of all this, the prophet himself is full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and he talks of judgment in the hearing of the nations. "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." (iii. 12.)

2. The very first expression of the goodly estate of Zion in the days of the kingdom (here called "the last days"), which Micah gives us in chapters iv., v., is that fine one which is presented also by Isaiah in his second chapter, namely, the peoples of the earth, all the world over, coming up to her to learn the ways or statutes of the King of glory then seated there. This is highly characteristic.

In this present time of the ministry of grace, the Saviour's messengers *go forth*, carrying glad tidings with them, and beseeching sinners to be reconciled. (2 Cor. v. 20.) For love is active in goodness; it busies itself at its own cost about the blessing of others.

But royalty and judgment take a different attitude. Judgment enthrones itself, and will *be waited upon* and listened to. If a king reign in righteousness, the people must be in attendance. His courts must be filled. His will is to be learned and observed. And thus it is here.

But if it be a sceptre of righteousness, it shall be also of peace; and a willing, happy world shall witness that a morning has risen without clouds, and that another Solomon, a greater than Solomon, has taken rule in Zion over the whole earth. (2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4.) The remnant now scattered are brought home; and in Jerusalem

the Lord, the Messiah, reigns over them, His natural-born subjects.

The prophet speaks of all this, and then turning to Judah, leaves the Assyrian of his day for the Chaldean of a coming day; and the daughter of Zion is taught to know that she must go to Babylon before she can be brought forth in the majesty that is to be hers in the days of the kingdom. It is in Babylon her pains, her travailing is to end; but the progress of the delivery is noticed: "Thou shalt go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon, and there shalt thou be delivered, there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies." (iv. 10.) Zion must reach her joy through captivity, and come to honour through sore sorrow. As it had been told Abraham of old that his seed should sojourn in a strange land for centuries, before they came to their inheritance, so it was: the brick-kilns of Egypt went before the victories of Joshua. And now again, Babylon is as a second Egypt to the children of Zion, before "the first dominion" come to them, before the palmy days of David and Solomon be restored.

The day of the Chaldean leads the prophet to the day of Israel's confederated enemies at the close. (Jer. iv. 10,\* 11.) The closing visitation will be severe, and the rejection of Christ is brought forward as the occasion and the warrant for this. Judah insulted Messiah when He came to them. The Judge of Israel was smitten on

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\*. Between the times of these two verses there is a long interval, not noticed, however, by Micah.



the check. (Matt. xxvii. 30.) But the One whom they refused and insulted shall be their only hope. This is Joseph again, and Moses again. Those whom the nation once refused are their only strength and expectation in the day of their calamity. And thus *because of Messiah*, whom they once insulted, the Assyrian of the last days shall seek to trouble Israel *in vain*.

The condition of the people under such a Messiah is then detailed. They shall be purified, while their enemies shall be destroyed. The remnant shall now "abide," because their Messiah in strength and majesty "shall be great unto the ends of the earth." They shall be also as "dew from the Lord," and as "a young lion among the flocks," the occasion of either blessing or judgment to all around them. (v. 4-9.)

And in the midst of all this, Messiah the Ruler is presented in various glories, personal and official; and poor Bethlehem, little in Judah, is honoured because of Him. For as the poor carpenter's wife of Nazareth, His mother, so the poor town of Bethlehem, His birth-place, take honour and blessing because of Him. This leaves us at the end of chapter v.

3. The earlier chapters of this prophet have been giving us a view of the Lord's *hand* with Israel. Here we get the way of His *Spirit* with them. (v., vi.) These two subjects very much occupy all the prophets some way or another. They constitute the political and the moral history of God's people, or the restoration and the conversion of Israel.

The work of the Spirit, in these chapters of Micah, is given to us in the form of a dialogue. The exercises of the soul are delineated as in a

living person, and the dealings of God in answer are given to us as upon the voice of the Lord Himself; and therefore these chapters may remind us of the Psalms, where the pulses of the heart are so constantly felt, and the path of the spirit of a man as led of God is so variously tracked. We get *personality* here, as there.

It is the Lord that opens this dialogue. He challenges the ways of His people; and this He does as in the hearing of the mountains, and the hills, and the foundations of the earth. He refuses not, as it were, to let the whole creation be present when He judges. The Judge of all the earth does right; therefore let heaven and earth wait as in the courts of His righteousness, and before the throne of His judgments. (Gen. xviii. 25; Deut. xxxii. 1.)

This challenge has been heard by a remnant, and they answer it in verses 6, 7. They are awakened to know the sword of the Lord which has now been lifted up. They are alarmed, and would find a refuge. Ignorance of God and His ways and truth mark their words. But no matter. It is no longer the sleep or stupidity of the soul: there has been a quickening.

The Lord shortly answers them. He lets the awakened, inquiring ones learn what is "good" and what is "required." That which is "good" is shown to them. God reveals it, as we know, as belonging to Himself. "There is none good but one, that is God." (Matt. xix. 17.) The gospel reveals this in its fulness. That which is "required," or demanded, is nothing of man's cattle for offerings; it is not rivers of oil, or the fruit of his body: it is that only which is *morally* fitting, that we should do justly, love mercy, and

walk humbly. (v. 8.) This is perfect in its place.

But having thus shortly answered the remnant (the "man," as he is here called, the one that had ears to hear in the midst of the reprobate nation), the Lord goes on with His challenges of the nation, detailing still further, and with awful disclosures, the ways and iniquities of Israel. For His voice was to the city, though He will surely hear and answer the cry of His remnant, who have heard His rod and Him that hath appointed it. (vv. 9-16.)

The quickened ones then at once take up the word, and seal the judgment which had just been pronounced, owning that things were indeed as bad as they could be, that few were left to form a Godly seed in the midst of the people, and that the nearest and the dearest relationships were violated.

But they avoid where they had not found their refuge and relief, even in God Himself, so that they could challenge all that might oppose them. And yet, with all this happy, holy boldness in the presence of their enemies, they humble themselves under the Lord's hand, knowing and owning that, as of a sinning, unclean people, they had no answer for Him. (vii. 1-10.)

To this the Lord again replies, and it is beautiful. If the godly had just set their seal to the righteousness of His judgments, He now in His way sets His seal to their expectations, and talks to them of the day when their captivity should be turned, when they should be re-established in their own land and city, and the purposes of their adversaries be all frustrated, and when they should be sought by the nations around them,

after their penal righteous desolations. (*vv.* 11-13.)

Again the remnant take up the word. Being encouraged, they seek for a restoration of those days when all the tribes were at home in their inheritance, even in the distant eastern places of Bashan and Gilead. (*v.* 14.)

The Lord, in answering, exceeds this desire; for grace, I may surely say, abounds over faith, as well as over sin. Sin does not exhaust it; faith does not measure it. The Lord here pledges that the day of the Exodus shall be renewed, and that His Israel shall again enjoy strange and magnificent displays of His power on their behalf, as once they did when He brought them forth from the land of Egypt. (*vv.* 15-17.)

These gracious words, however, the remnant interrupt, insisting (as it were, when they had listened to the story of these mercies) on giving all the glory to God, and that the secret of their deliverance lay in the fear of Him, which their enemies were then to know. This interruption is seen in the last clause of verse 17.

But then, having thus taken the words to themselves, ascribing the honour of these great, final, delivering mercies to the Lord alone, they continue in that strain; and in fervency of spirit utter the praises of His grace and faithfulness. (*vv.* 18-20.)

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Self-exaltation is neither possible nor desired in the presence and enjoyment of God.

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# 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).

## **The Defection and Restoration of a Servant of Christ.**

**T**HE four Gospels furnish a narrative of the acts of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, in the Acts of the Apostles we have a narrative of the acts of God the Holy Ghost who came down from heaven on the day of Pentecost.

The Lord Jesus acted in His own immediate Person. The Holy Ghost acted in the apostles and others; and accordingly, as we read the inspired missionary record, we have frequently to remember that the various instruments whom He uses were in themselves feeble, failing men. And not only have we to take into account the infirmity of man, but also the hostile influences of surrounding circumstances, as used of Satan for the purpose of hindering the work, and cramping and ensnaring the workmen.

In this way the study of the Book of Acts is most interesting and practical. In it we have men and things, localities and their influences, looked at, and presented by the Holy Ghost, with direct reference to the great work which He was at that time, and still is, carrying on.

At the close of the twelfth chapter of Acts we read, "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John whose surname was Mark." In the next chapter, we find this same John Mark accompanying Paul and Barnabas on a mission, and continuing with them, during their sojourn in the Island of Cyprus; but on their leaving that, and proceeding "to Perga in Pamphylia," we read that "John departing from them returned unto Jerusalem." (xiii. 13) Home influences, as well as religious privileges, would no doubt attract the heart of John Mark, and induce him to abandon the arduous path of missionary labour.

In chapter xii. we read of "the house of Mary, *the mother of John*, whose surname was Mark; where *many were gathered together praying.*" Here we have the two things, namely, the power of natural affection, and the rare spiritual attraction of Christian fellowship. Need we wonder that John Mark vastly preferred a prayer-meeting in his mother's house at Jerusalem to the hardships of a mission in Pamphylia or Pisidia?

Ah! my dear reader, the heart is but too well able to understand the preference. There was a vast difference between a comfortable home, regular habits, a mother's love and care, the peaceful charms of well-ordered domestic life and all the roughness, severity, and hardship of a precarious

missionary tour. Furthermore, there was a striking contrast, indeed, between an assembly of loving and united Christian friends gathered for prayer in the city of Jerusalem, and a synagogue of bigoted Jews at Antioch, or a fickle heathen mob at Lystra of Lycaonia.

However, the judgment which we form of the actings of John Mark will entirely depend on the point of view from which we contemplate them. In the judgment of mere nature, in its amiability, or even in its religiousness, there was nothing reprehensible; but in the judgment of an unbiassed, single-eyed servant of Christ, he was all wrong. It is very evident that Barnabas and Paul looked at Mark's conduct from those opposite points. A passage in Acts xv. proves this very clearly. "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again, and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and *went not with them to the work*. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas *took Mark*, and sailed *unto Cyprus*." Thus we see that Mark, by yielding to the attractive influences of his home at Jerusalem; not only abandoned the work, but also snapped the link between two workmen.

But whether was Paul or Barnabas in the right? The sequel answers. "Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." We hear

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nothing of Barnabas being recommended to the grace of God, or of his confirming the churches. In fact, his name never again appears in the inspired missionary record. He took his nephew with him, and sailed to Cyprus, where, upon his first starting on the Christian course, he had sold his land. (Col. iv. 10; Acts iv. 36.) All this is full of meaning, full of deep and solemn instruction, replete with salutary warning for everyone who desires to pursue a path of thorough devotedness to Christ and His service. The voice which it utters is distinctly this: "Beware how you allow home influences, nature's soft and enervating attractions, or even spiritual advantages, to draw you off from the stern realities of active labour in the vineyard of Christ." Jerusalem and Cyprus had charms for John Mark and his uncle Barnabas, charms sufficiently powerful to allure them from the side of that ever earnest, ever harnessed workman, Paul.

But some may say, "Could not Barnabas and Mark serve the Lord at Jerusalem or Cyprus as well as at Perga or Antioch?"

Assuredly. Paul himself, as we know, served in both these places. But was it the service of Christ that led Mark back to Jerusalem, or Barnabas back to Cyprus? This is the question. Let the spiritual reader answer it in the light of the Acts of the Apostles. One thing is plain, they both travelled out of the current of the Spirit's action, and their names never again appear in the inspired annals of missionary labour. True, they were both children of God and servants of Christ. Barnabas "was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith"; and as to Mark, we find some touching allusions to him in Paul's

## THE DEFECTION AND RESTORATION, ETC. 53

epistles, which would warrant the conclusion that he had somewhat regained his place in the apostle's heart. "Aristarchus, my fellow-prisoner, saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments), if he came unto you, receive him." (Col. iv. 10.) And again, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee, *for he is profitable unto me for the ministry.*" (2 Tim. iv. 11.)

It is also well worthy of notice that the Holy Ghost should have selected Mark as His instrument to write that Gospel which so especially presents Christ as the true Workman, the faithful Minister, the self-denying Servant, the One whom no influence whatever could move a single hair's-breadth from the straight line of devotedness to God and His work. Doubtless, a more enlarged communion with that only perfect Servant had rendered Mark "profitable for the ministry," so that Paul could say to his devoted son Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee."

Lovely picture! Precious fruit of divine grace on all sides! The Lord had raised up Timothy to be a faithful yokefellow for Paul when both Mark and Barnabas had forsaken him; and now Timothy is commanded to take this Mark, and bring him to Paul, as a profitable help in the ministry. Such are the marvellous ways of grace!

Oh! for deeper and more abiding communion with the blessed Master! May we live near to Him! May we drink into His spirit, and walk in His footsteps! Then shall we be raised above every influence that would tend to withdraw us from His service, whether that influence arise from "Jerusalem" or from "Cyprus." May we be enabled, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to

gird on the harness, and go forth in whole-hearted devotedness to Christ and His cause! The Lord, in His great mercy, grant it! May we be "profitable for the ministry," in some small degree! Let us aim at a higher character of devotedness than ever we have exhibited. JESUS is worthy of the supreme place in our heart's affections. If, therefore, His service calls us to endure hardness and roughness, privation and trial, let us not sigh after the attractions of "Jerusalem" or "Cyprus." Let neither nature nor earth entangle us; but may our language ever be,

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small,  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

---

Christ, our precious Saviour, is an object near to us. He is not ashamed to call us *brethren*. He has called us *friends*. All that He has heard from His Father He has made known to us. Is He, then, a means of our eyes being turned away from God? On the contrary, it is in Him that God is manifested, in Him that even the angels see God. It is He who, being in the bosom of the Father, reveals to us His God and Father in this sweet relationship, and as He knows Him Himself. And not only this, but He is in the Father, and the Father in Him; so that he who has seen Him has seen the Father. He reveals God to us, instead of turning us away from Him. In grace He has already revealed Him, and we wait for the revelation of glory in Him.

## Reflections on the Book of Nahum.

**T**HE Ninevite was the first great man of the earth in the age of the *kingdom*, as I may speak; as Nimrod, the ancestor, as to territory, of the Ninevite, had been the great man of the earth in the earlier age of the *fathers*. Nimrod had affected dominion and empire then, when as yet things were in primitive and simpler condition.

Now that kingdoms have been formed, and nations rather than families overspread the earth, the king of Nineveh, in Nimrod-pride and worldliness, affects dominion and empire in the midst of them. He is not one of the great *imperial* powers that are looked at in Daniel. He is neither the head of gold, nor the breast of silver, nor the thighs of brass, nor the legs of iron.

Such an image had not begun to be formed in the day of Nineveh, when the king of Assyria was supreme in the world. But among the kingdoms which were then formed, in days preceding the day of the Chaldean head of gold, he was eminent. Asshur had carried away captive many of them. Amalek was then gone from the scene, and the Kenites had been wasted until their full removal was accomplished by the Assyrians. (Num. xxiv. 20-22.) And further, the Assyrians had insulted and reduced that people whom the Lord God of heaven and earth had chosen as the lot of His inheritance, and formed for Himself.

The Lord, in that action, had used him as a rod upon His disobedient, rebellious Israel; but "he meant not so." He purposed "to take the spoil, and to take the prey." Pride gives him his only language; "Are not my princes altogether

kings?" he says. "As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?" (Isa. x. 5-11.)

The Lord God was angry. He pronounces a burden upon him, and Nahum delivers it. The Lord is a jealous God and a Revenger. (Nahum i. 2.)

The ministry of Jonah, as well as that of Nahum, had respect to Nineveh. We have considered that already in our reflections on Jonah's prophecy. Jonah preceded Nahum, it may be, about a hundred and twenty years. Under the word of Jonah, Nineveh had repented; but the word which now follows by Nahum is a notice of judgment; final judgment; judgment that is to make an utter end. "Affliction," says the prophet, "shall not rise up the second time." (v. 9.)

What are we to say, then, of Nineveh's repentance in the day of Jonah? Was it as the morning cloud or early dew, a goodness that passed away? It may have been such. Or, it may have been *reformation*, and a genuine work like that in another Gentile world, the Christendom of this present age. It worked its fruit, and had its blessing at the time, and it would seem, left its witness behind it, even in this distant day of Nahum. (i. 7.) There may have been a remnant in Nineveh! I say not otherwise. But at the most it was but a blessing in the cluster. "My leanness, my leanness," Nineveh surely had to say. (Isa. xxiv. 16.)

The repentance in the day of Jonah, like the Reformation in Christendom, secured nothing;

it did not prepare Nineveh for glory, or for a place in the kingdom of God. Whatever may have been the moral fruit of it in a remnant in this distant day of Nahum, Nineveh, as a city or kingdom, had returned, like a sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire, and ripened herself for the cutting off of the land.

This is a figure for us to study, a voice for us to hear.

What did Jehoshaphat-days, or Hezekiah-days, or Josiah-days do for Jerusalem? Did judgment after such days enter by the hand of the Chaldean, though they were very fair and promising? We know it did.

Did Nineveh want the day of the Lord, though once upon a time the king there descended from his throne, and sat in ashes, and man and beast were clothed in sackcloth, and neither did eat nor drink? Yes, we know this also.

And I may ask again, What has *reformation* done for Christendom? Coming judgments, and not the Reformation, or progress, or education for the million, will prepare the world for the glory and kingdom of the Lord.

But further. The earlier history of God's dealings with Nineveh by the hand of Jonah may, in this day of judgment announced by Nahum, witness to us that He is "slow to anger"; for He sent a preacher then to warn, and turn them to that repentance which He received, and spared them. But He that is "slow to anger," does not "acquit the wicked." (i. 3.) There is a separating between the precious and the vile. "He knoweth them that trust in Him," even the remnant in Nineveh, if there be such, as we said before (chap. i. 7); but the Judge of all the earth, like

the Judge of Sodom before whom Abraham stood, "will do right." (Gen. xviii. 22, 25.)

"I doubt not," says another, "that the invasion of Sennacherib was the occasion of this prophecy; but most evidently it goes much beyond that event, and the judgment is final. And this is another instance of that which we so frequently observe in the prophets, a partial judgment serving as a warning or an encouragement to the people of God, while it was only a forerunner of a future judgment in which all the dealings of God would be summed up and manifested."

Surely the Assyrian is a mystic or representative person, as well as a real individual. Isaiah so looks at him. And this was easy and natural; for the Assyrian began the captivities of God's people, and in his day represented the enmity of the earth, the enmity of the Gentile world, to God and His people. The Spirit, therefore, in the prophets, sees the Gentile in him, and looks along the vista which then opened, to the very end of the earth's history under the Gentile or the man of the world, when the full-measured and ripened iniquity of man shall call forth the closing, clearing judgments of God.

But does judgment close the story? That never has been, nor could it be. It only makes way for the purpose of God. The judgment of "this present evil world" will introduce the Millennium, or "the world to come." And Israel will be received as the seal and pledge of that bright and happy age, as our prophet says: "Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder." "O Judah,



keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows; for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off." (i. 12-15.) Or, in the words of one of ourselves, the saints of God in this day, "The vengeance of God is the deliverance of the world from the oppression and misery of the yoke of the enemy and of lust, that it may flourish under the peaceful eye of its Deliverer."

Do not the present doings of the Spirit show a rapid gathering in of the elect unto the hastening of that hour?

"Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. xxii. 20.)

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THE WORD is the communication, *in time*, of the eternal thoughts of God Himself in Christ. It finds man under the power of sin, and reveals peace and deliverance; and it shows how he can have part in the result of God's thoughts. But these thoughts themselves are nothing else than the plan, the eternal purpose, of His grace in Christ, to bestow on us everlasting life in Christ, a life which existed in God before the world was. THE WORD is preached, manifested; that is, the revelation of the thoughts of God in Christ. Now, those thoughts gave us eternal life in Christ; and this was promised before the ages. The elect, believing, know it, and possess the life itself. They have the witness in themselves; but THE WORD is the public revelation on which faith is founded, and which has universal authority over the consciences of men, whether they receive it or not.

## **Fathers, Young Men, and Babes in Christ.**

A WORD ON "ABIDING IN HIM."

READ I JOHN II.

### **I.**

**T**HERE is especial power in this epistle for the strengthening and establishment of our souls, as also for security against haughty assumption.

The Word has provided for all our need. The mere doctrine of salvation will not do. "Already," says the apostle, "are there many antichrists."

"This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) . . . . This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him," etc. (chap. i. 1-7).

God reveals Himself. Man is apt to fancy he gets up to God, and finding such knowledge too high for him, he loses himself in the light, he knows not where. The Holy Ghost brings us here to that which might be "heard" and "seen" and "looked upon," and "handled" of the Word of life

When saying, "Hereby perceive we the love of God," it is added, "because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (Chap. iii. 6.)

Again: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 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 that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (Chap. iv. 9-16.)

The soul is brought from the mysterious apprehension of man's thoughts about "the Deity" and "dwelling in God" to the propitiation; thus connecting the highest flights (so that no seducer could pretend to lead higher), all this elevation of doctrine about our dwelling in God and God in us, with the simple, precious truth, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and with the plainest and most simple walk of the saint in brotherly love and practical godliness.

The Word speaks of his dwelling in God and

God in him, and then comes back to the plainest doctrine for simple Christians, "He is the propitiation for our sins." Here the most advanced and the most simple meet together; nay, the most advanced will be the most simple, and will constantly turn back to the blood. He who is taught of God is taught to humble himself; his soul never loses the sense of his nothingness. The mystic may exalt himself; but the man brought by Christ to God is necessarily humble.

It is "*God manifest in the flesh*," not God mystical. Thus the soul is guarded from error and seduction. We are told not merely of life, but of life manifested. We get fellowship with the Father, but it is through Christ. There is the plainest moral evidence, such as cannot be escaped from by any, where life is; if it is not Christ, it is darkness; if it is Christ, it must be judged by Christ as He was down here. These things are written that our joy may be full. I cannot have more: I have eternal life, I have joy, I have light, and all this in Christ; I may know more about it (that is another thing), but if my knowledge brings me anything more than the Father and the Son, it is error.

But then the life of Christ shines out. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked. . . . Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." The veil is rent, and we are to abide in the light. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now," etc. Talk not of attainments, and not of love; it is a mistake,

where love is not, Christ is not; all His walk was love.

In verse 12 the apostle gets into detail. "I write unto you, children,"\* he says, "because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake."

The "*fathers*" (the name designates the greatest maturity in grace) are addressed specifically (v. 13); but he has not anything more to say to them than, "Ye have known HIM that is from the beginning." And this is no passing thought; for, when he repeats his address (v. 14), he can say nothing higher. Let who will come and tell you wonderful things, you cannot get beyond or higher than this, you know HIM that is from the beginning.

It is instructive to mark the silence of the Holy Spirit as to adjectives. When speaking of Jesus, He does not add an epithet. That name is enough; it carries with it a power which keeps the mind in reverence in the presence of God. We cannot get out an expression of our feeling there, though we may and do among brethren; we can add nothing to that name; God knows all it conveys; His eye surveys all its loveliness, and alone can span its vastness. And mark, it is not said, "You know all doctrine," (important as it is, that we should be clear as to doctrine); but "You have known *Him*." We cannot have a truth really in faith, except as it is connected with Christ. He is the one object of the saint's faith.

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\* *Little* children, as it is in our translation. I omit the word because we have to distinguish between this and the "*little children*" addressed, verses 13, 18, in contrast with *fathers* and *young men*. This is addressed to the whole of those to whom the apostle is writing, as also are verses 1, 28; he includes all.

The “ *young men* ” have “ overcome the wicked one.” Here there is energy of faith. It is impossible to be in any energy that is of the Spirit and not be brought into conflict with Satan; and, if there is this energy, there will also be the overcoming. But this supposes the death of the flesh.

There is a vast deal of energy without the subduing of self, and all that is not energy with Satan. It is there we fail, and let Satan in. There is a certain turning-point with the soul, when it has come to a knowledge of itself; that there is not anything good in the flesh, that not anything of self can overcome evil, that “By strength shall no man prevail,” we learn to say, “When I am weak, then I am strong.”

When the soul has learned to distrust self, there is no haste in what it does. It has to do with God. One true-hearted Christian will see evil, and seek to remedy or overcome it with all vigour and energy, while another, more deeply taught of God, takes the trouble to humble himself, and goes to God about it, before he begins to work against it.

God will accomplish all His will, and the true-hearted saint, going to work in a good deal of his own energy, is sometimes blessed in his work, and afterwards gets humbled, it may be with chastening, and blessed in separating between the flesh and the Spirit.

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Christian life is not only characterized by certain subjective qualities which flow from Christ, but by its having Christ Himself for the aim and object of the heart and mind in all that we do in every respect.

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# 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).

## Reflections on the Book of Habakkuk.

**W**E must begin with God, as sinners, on the principle of faith, and go on with Him to the end, as saints, on the same principle. "The just shall live by faith." (Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38, taken from Hab. ii. 4.)

This prophecy of Habakkuk has great moral value for us. But besides this, it is seasonable now; for in this our day things are ripening to a crisis, as they were in the day of Habakkuk.

His was a day when the iniquities of the professing people of God were moving the holy anger and sorrow of this man of God. And yet, while his soul was thus vexed with their evil conversation, his heart would feel for their misery, and he would earnestly make their cause his own.

I would listen to him a little carefully for a

few minutes, and observe upon his words as they show themselves to us in their natural parts and order.

i. 1-4. In these opening verses, as I noticed already, the prophet's righteous soul is vexed with the evil conversation of his nation. He presents the sad, reprobate scene that was lying under his eye to the notice of the Lord. He cries out of violence, and grievance, and spoiling, and strife, and such like iniquity, found, as it was, in the very midst of God's people.

vv. 5-11. In His answer to this cry of His servant, the Lord seems, at the first, to vindicate and to join with it. He enters into the resentment of the moral state of Israel, which Habakkuk was so deeply feeling. He challenges His people as "heathen," for such they would prove themselves to be, by not believing the work that He Himself was purposing to work among them. He counts their circumcision as uncircumcision. The apostle, quoting this word from our prophet, calls them "despisers." (Acts xiii. 41.) The Lord therefore, thus at the first, follows the story of Israel's iniquities, which the prophet had been rehearsing, and anticipates their great crowning, closing iniquity, the rejection of His word and work through unbelief.

But having done this, He lets the prophet know that this iniquity which had been vexing his soul, and against which he had been crying to Him, should not go unpunished, for that the Chaldean sword should soon enter the land to avenge the quarrel of His holiness.

vv. 12-17. Hearing this, Habakkuk is terribly alarmed. Like Moses in such a case, he cannot be prepared for this; nor can his heart, that so



cared for his people, welcome the Chaldean, however his soul may be angry with their evil ways.

In the deepest strain of fear and of feeling, and in the skilfulness of an advocate whose affections were making him eloquent, he pleads against the Chaldean, assured that the Lord would not give over His own people, however guilty they might be, to the reckless wrath of those who were still more wicked than themselves. Moreover, he seeks that this terrible scourge may, in the Lord's grace, be only for *correction*, and not for *destruction*, to Israel.

All this is a sweet state of soul in our prophet. Habakkuk, perhaps, is more of a Jeremiah than any of the prophets. He lives more *personally* in the scenes he was describing than is common. He *feels* everything; and so did Jeremiah. They *lived* the prophet, and not merely *spoke* as such.

ii. 1. And having thus unburdened his heart, and pleaded with the Lord, he waits for the answer. His heart is with his people, and he must watch for "the end of the Lord." (James v. 11.) He is no hireling; he cares for the flock, and cannot flee. His service for Israel had not been lightly taken up, and it cannot therefore be quickly laid down. He must see the end of it; and for this he sets himself upon the watch-tower.

vv. 2-20. Here we read the Lord's answer; and it is full of solemn, interesting meaning. Habakkuk shall not be disappointed; he shall not be on his tower for nothing. As Daniel's fasting for his twenty-one days, so Habakkuk's watching on the tower shall be rewarded.

The Lord, however, begins His answer by stating some strong, leading facts, or rather principles of truth.

1. That the vision or prophecy was to be clearly announced.

2. That all was to remain in vision, or unfulfilled for a season.

3. That during that season the man of the world would ripen himself in pride for the judgment of God.

4. That during the same season the saint should live by faith.

5. That in due season, God's appointed time, the vision should speak, the prophecy be fulfilled, so that the end was surely worth waiting for.

Then, having laid down these facts or principles, the Lord goes on to announce, to the welcoming ear of the prophet, the awful judgments that were to overtake the Chaldean.

iii. Having listened to this from his watchtower, the prophet, as I may say, descends to speak with the Lord. Having been graciously visited and answered on the tower, he will now enter the sanctuary, as with the voice of prayer and praise, and in the power of that faith which had accepted the answer of God, rejoiced in it, and counted on still further blessing.

But these his closing words are very beautiful.

The answer he had just received seems at once to put him in spirit back to the earliest days of his nation, or the time of the salvation of God, when He was beginning to make Israel His people. (Exod. xiv. 13.) The Chaldean reminded him of the Egyptian and of the Amorite. And he desires that the Lord would do for Israel now, in the face of the Chaldean, what in those primitive days He had done for them in the face of the Egyptian and the Amorite. He seeks that there

may be "a revival," that now in the midst of the years God would do the works which so wondrously marked the *beginning* of the years. And with affecting beauty, and in the broken style of one who was following the currents of a heart alive to its subject, he rehearses, as in the divine presence, those early works of Jehovah in behalf of Israel, whether accomplished in Egypt, or in the wilderness, or in Canaan, that (if I may so speak), the Lord might look at those mighty doings of His, and do the like in these present Chaldean times.

It is as if Habakkuk were lifting up the bow under the eye of God in the day of the cloud; so that, looking at it, He might remember His covenant, His grace, and His power for His saints, His promises and His mercies, and save His people from this threatened overwhelming. (Gen. ix. 12-17.) For as yet the Lord had only promised judgment on the Chaldean (ii.) He had not spoken of the final restoration and glory of Israel; but Habakkuk must have this also promised and secured; and therefore he prays for "a revival" of His work in behalf of Israel.

And then, at the very end, as the just man living by faith, whom the Lord's word had already told him of, he utters his present full confidence in God. (ii.) He tells, indeed, how the Lord's word about the coming of the Chaldean had frightened him, so that he was as one astonished, or as a dead man; but that now, as a man of faith, he knows that he has but to wait, through a season of discipline and patience, assured that all will end in the salvation of God. And, in the joyous assurance of this, he sings to the chief singer on his stringed instrument; and

as Jehoshaphat entered the battle with the song of victory on his lips, so Habakkuk now enters on the season of the vision, or of the exercise of faith and patience, in the joy of the Lord, and with a song prepared as for a day of glory.

Now upon this we may again say, The present day may put us much in company with Habakkuk. The man of God looks round, and sees everything in Christendom to provoke the resentment of holiness, or to vex the righteous soul. But while he resents the thing, he would fain plead for the people, like Habakkuk; and, like him again, turn to God, with his burdens and his expectations.

But, somewhat beyond our prophet, the believer now, from the fuller instructions of God, *knows* there will be "a revival," and does not merely pray for it. He knows that the judgments which are coming, more solemn than that by the hand of the Chaldean, will only clear the earth of all that offends, take out of it all that are corrupting it, and thus lead to its redemption, and not to its destruction. And he knows that a brighter, richer condition will mark its end, than that which did its beginning, for "the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom. viii. 21.) So that it will not be merely a revival of early days in the history of either Israel or the earth; but their latter end, like that of Job, will be more than their beginning.

And I would add a practical word upon the experience of Habakkuk, which is so blessed at the end. "I will rejoice in the Lord," he says, "although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines."

To live happily in the love of God, through

Jesus, is the glory He seeks at our hand, sinners, self-ruined, as we are. And to do this, like Habakkuk, in spite of the contradiction of the circumstances, makes this service and worship still more excellent, the fruit, as it surely is, of His grace and inworking power.

Man seeks to live *pleasurably*, but he has no care to live *happily*. He would live pleasurably, or in the sunshine of favouring, flattering circumstances; but to live happily, or in favour of God, in the light of His countenance, the sense of His love, and the hope of His presence in glory, this is not what man cares about. And it is God's work in the heart and conscience, when man is bethinking himself, and seeking to cease from living pleasurably, that he may live happily, finding his life only in the greatest of all circumstances, that is, in his relation to God, having discovered, through grace, that that relationship is settled for him for ever, in the precious reconciliation accomplished in the blood of Christ.

And let me still take on me to add another word on what the Lord says as to the Chaldean in ii. 14: "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The pride of man, whether he be Chaldean or any other, that would affect universal empire, has ever been, and shall still be, judged and broken; and that dominion shall be reserved for Jesus "the Lord," and for Him only. He shall be made higher than the kings of the earth, and His kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Neither the past nor the present unbelief of His own nation, Israel, nor the purposes and attempts of any of

the Gentiles, shall hinder this (Num. xiv. 21; Hab. ii. 14). For, in the coming peaceful days of the sceptre of the righteous One, this shall be accomplished. (Isa. xi. 9.)

The people shall labour after this, but they shall weary themselves for nothing, for "very vanity." (ii. 13.) But JESUS shall have it. "Blessed be His glorious Name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen." (Ps. lxxii.)

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## Brief Remarks upon the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Revelation II. and III.

### I.

**I**N considering these letters of the Lord Jesus to the Seven Churches, three facts should be borne in mind.

(1) These churches actually existed in the days of the apostle John, and were in the condition which the letters describe. We know there were other churches, as there may have been many, but the wisdom of God led to the selection of these seven. They are said to be "the things which are." (Rev. i. 19.)

(2) The moral instruction therein given is for the guidance and blessing of individual Christians in all ages of the Church. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (ii. 7.)

(3) That they have an extended application from

John's time to the close of the Church's existence on the earth. We never read of the Church, or of churches, as on the earth after the close of the third chapter. This view, you will observe, agrees with the general character of this book, which is *prophetical*. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this *prophecy*." (i. 3.)

In these seven epistles, then, we have what may be fairly called an inspired history of the Church, though prophetically given. But what a charm this gives to Church history, properly so called! We see God's hand and interest in it, and surely everything that interests Him ought to interest us. Besides, in reading about the dear suffering ones in past ages, we are reading about our brothers and sisters who loved the Lord and His word more than their lives.

On the other hand, what can give us such a true idea of the real spirit of the world, as to see it persecuting and killing unoffending men and women, just because they love the Lord that died for them? But this is what we have to expect from the world, whether it appears in the garb of heathenism, or under the cloak of the Christian name and profession. "For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." (1 Thess. iii. 3.) The Lord Jesus Himself found as little sympathy in the Jewish synagogue as in the hall of Pilate.

EPHESUS. Falling from first love is the charge against the church at Ephesus. Already this church had sadly declined; in heart at least. Outwardly they were going on very well. I dare say, had we seen them, we should have thought them most zealous, godly, and devoted. "I know thy works," says the Lord, "and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that

are evil." (ii. 2.) But, alas! the heart was away from Him. And you will observe that He does not say works of *faith*, and labour of *love*, and patience of *hope*, as in the case of the Thessalonians. (1 Thess. i. 3.) The words "faith, love, hope" are wanting. This makes all the difference. The three Christian graces are not in exercise. This was what grieved and disappointed His heart. In His sight, however fair outward appearance might be, Ephesus was fallen. "Remember therefore from whence thou art *fallen*, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (ii. 5.)

These sorrowful complaints show us how strongly the Lord feels the slipping away of our hearts from Him, even when good works are kept up.

But some may be disposed to ask, "What is falling from first love, when good works are maintained?"

I believe it is our ceasing to find all our delight in Christ Himself. So long as He has His right place in our hearts, our love can never decline. We all know that "love begets love," and that only love in return can satisfy love. If we are dwelling on Christ's love to us, and on His great work for us, as the manifestation of His love, ours must grow exceedingly. But if we lose the sweet sense and enjoyment of His love, ours soon cools down. His never does, blessed be His name. It is like the water-mark on a tidal river, which remains at the same height whether the tide ebbs or flows. But you can soon tell from this standard when the water begins to fall! You may see it gradually decline. If the river of your love or



mine falls a single hair's breadth, Christ's eye sees it, His heart feels it. Were His love to cool down as fast as ours, the difference would not be seen. Oh! what grace and patience to bear with us, and to love us all the same, and never grow weary in seeking to win us back to our first love. Oh! that He might see in us that which would refresh and delight His heart.

Amongst the innumerable evils that flow from the heart slipping away from Christ, the want of spiritual discernment and sound spiritual feelings are most manifest. Evil had crept into the Church. Such a thing should never have been allowed there. The Church ought to have been the power and manifestation of holiness in the midst of evil, but never associated with it. It is described by Paul to his beloved son Timothy as "the house of God which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) Here we are told that the Assembly of God is His dwelling-place; and the support and display of the truth. Surely, then, the Assembly of God ought to study what suits Him, not themselves; what is due to His character and claims, not their own.

You will observe that the Lord speaks in strong terms when He refers to the evil that is in the church at Ephesus. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." (ii. 6.)

Discipline is not the question here. That we have elsewhere; but He says in plainest terms that *He hates evil*. Surely that should be enough for all our hearts. The Lord enable us by His grace to keep the house clean enough for Him.

We may just notice, in passing, the great difference in the style of the address to the church

at Ephesus in this epistle and that on a former occasion by Paul. There, the saints are addressed as "the faithful in Christ Jesus." (Eph. i. 17.) Here they are addressed, not directly, but through their angel, or representative. A certain distance and reserve are maintained. There, Christ is presented as the Head of the body, ministering nourishment to the members. Here, He is seen in the capacity of a Judge, holding the seven stars in His right hand, and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. There, in short, we see the Church in all the fulness of heavenly grace; here, in responsibility on the earth; but, alas! as an unfaithful witness. Nevertheless, *His* love is unchangeable, and His eye sees the faithful few in the midst of a general decline, and meets them in special grace. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (ii. 7.)

SMYRNA. The state of the church in Smyrna evidently foreshadows the period of the Church's suffering under the Roman Emperors. The Lord permitted her to pass through the furnace, though His love counted and defined the days of her tribulation. (v. 10.) He loved her as much then as He did the day He died for her. But His heart was grieved because of her failure, and He suffered her to fall into the hands of the enemy, that she might be brought back to Himself. "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." Some have thought that the "ten days" refer to ten distinct persecutions under Rome Pagan; others, to ten years under Diocletian. What a fearful thing it is to be allowed to fall into Satan's hands! Oh! that we may be kept

so near to the Lord as never to need such chastening! He suffered this trial to come upon them that they might *feel* the bitterness of getting away from Him; and perhaps to prevent them from going farther.

But observe here the grace and tenderness of His heart in the way He presents Himself before them. "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." (v. 8.)

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## Fathers, Young Men, and Babes in Christ.

A WORD ON "ABIDING IN HIM."

READ I JOHN II.

II.

**T**HE "*little children*" have their sins forgiven them, and they "have known the Father."

The babes in Christ are looked at with the fathers and young men as sharing in this. It is wonderful to see how grace knits together the old and the young Christian; the old takes to the young, his heart yearns over the little one with the utmost parental anxiety. "Ye need not that any man teach you," the apostle says (v. 27); yet is he teaching them the while as though all depended on it.

And so will it always be. Where there is much grace, it is shown in the strong honouring the weak. The most instructed saint, instead of despising the weak, will cherish and teach them, and own their blessed portion.

Look at Paul's anxiety about the saints in Thessalonica. "Wherefore," he tells them, "when we could no longer forbear," having been hindered himself going, "we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus," etc.

In addressing the different states a second time, the "fathers" and "young men" are written to (vv. 14-17), and the "little children" (v. 18); and then (v. 28) resuming the general thread of the subject, he takes up the whole, and says to them, "ABIDE IN HIM."

John's heart rested in this: I know Christ. He knew the ways of Jesus, he had seen Him with his eyes.

We have not thus seen Christ; but we shall be able to say, "I know Him," when walking with Him.

If Christ were here, what would be His thoughts? Would not His heart be yearning over those who are living in the visible world, instead of the invisible?

In a little while not a trace will be left of that which now occupies their time and thoughts. Is not half the time even of Christians occupied with things of no value? What will be the effect of abiding in Him? We shall be living as He lived, walking as he walked, manifesting the life of Christ amidst earthly things. But I must have the vessel broken down, for Christ to come out—self set aside; or I may be killing the high priest's servant in my zeal. It is by bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal body. If "young men," *i.e.* if there is energy in the Spirit, beware of the opposite energy. The address to young men in the second place (v. 15), is not about

knowing the Father, nor yet simply about overcoming; if there is the overcoming of Satan, and the denying of the flesh, there must be also the resisting the things which Satan presents to set the flesh agoing; "Love not the world," he writes, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world," etc. The Lord Jesus says to the Father (John xvii.), "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee," etc. So here the apostle sets in contrast before them the world and all that is in it, and the Father. The love of the world is kept out of the heart by the love of the Father; the love of the world is a large word. But it is not merely that the thing is condemned; as Christians our life is not from that source, nor can it have fellowship with its spirit. In our every day circumstances, are not the affections distracted from things not seen by the things that are seen? That which is in question here, is not the working with our hands the things which are good, God can bless and preserve the soul in that; but the eye affects the heart, and what mean the varied forms of attraction for the senses on every hand? are they not just so many things to draw away the heart from the Father? "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

"It is the last time" (v. 18)—solemn, precious word! And yet it seems strange comfort, when the world is bad, to be told "that it will be worse." Paul writes: "The mystery of iniquity doth already work," etc. (2 Thess. ii. 9.) Good and evil are going on together; God carrying on His own

work, spite of all opposition. Is it not wonderful to see evil apparently getting the upper hand, and God not interfering to prevent it? only interfering in grace to draw men out of the world; and even they keep not their first love. What a picture do those constantly present who were gathered in true love to Jesus, in the course of five or six years! It is rare to find the same love. And thus it was even in Paul's time; he clings to Timothy as to a plank in a wreck. (Phil. ii 19, 22). How it makes the heart sink to see all seeking their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. But John says, "It is the last time; for now is the time of antichrists." This word comes in like dew from heaven. It is the last time! Jesus is soon coming! The heart pants for the morning without clouds! One looks with astonishment at the patience of God's grace! This sustains in conflict; and the heart pants, not to cease from service, but after God; not to rest from conflict, but for the resurrection morn. Thus God has turned the difficulties of the time into blessing. Satan may seek to hurt us, to mar the work of God; but he cannot master Him who has met all evil, and overcome it in the head of evil, who hath gotten Himself the victory.

"Ye have an unction from the Holy One" (not from the *wise* One or from the God of *knowledge*) to keep you. The enemies may be subtle, but the Spirit who dwells in you draws you to "continue in the Son and in the Father." Of course, it is assumed that we have Christ. (v. 28.)

"Now, that ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming, *abide in Him.*"

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JAMES CARTER, 13, Paternoster Row, London, E.C. 4. Bible Truth Depot, 1112, N. Taylor Av., St. Louis, Mo., U.S.A.

# 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).

## Reflections on the Book of Zephaniah.

**V**ERY commonly in the prophets, *glory* touches *judgment*. These are their themes, with the iniquity that provokes the judgment, and the characters that attach to the glory that follows.

But these things, *judgment* on iniquity and *glory* succeeding, have been again and again in the *history*, as they are again and again in the *prophecy*, of Scripture.

The day of Noah was such a day, a day when judgment introduced glory, or a new world. So the judgment on Egypt was accompanied or waited on by the deliverance of Israel, their triumphant song, the presence of the glory in the midst of them, and their journey onward to the land of promise. So the judgment on the

Canaanites or Amorites was at once followed by Israel's taking of their inheritance.

The day of Nebuchadnezzar was a kindred day of judgment. The spirit of prophecy lingers over it. Not only does it anticipate it in earlier prophets, as Isaiah and Micah, but it is, at the time, or about the time, poured out very largely, as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah witness.

And that day, the day of the Chaldean invasion and triumph, was truly a remarkable crisis. The iniquity of the kingdom of Judah was then full, as that of the Amorites had been in the day of Joshua. Sad, however, it is, indeed, that things should have taken such a turn; that the iniquity of the Jew was now full, and that the Gentile was called out to judge it, as once the iniquity of the Gentile had been full, and the Jew, the man of God, was called out to judge it.

But the Chaldean was not only a real, or historical person; he was also a representative or mysterious person. He stands forth in the prophets as telling us of coming and final judgments. His sword visited not only Judah and Jerusalem, but the surrounding nations. His was a day in which the God of all the earth was rising up, and the world had to keep silence. It was a miniature or inchoative judgment of all the nations. It was "the day of the Lord," in spirit or in principle. (Isa. ii. iii.) The sword was furbished for the slaughter. The dominion went from "the daughter of Jerusalem," for the house of David was reprobate, and the Chaldean took the throne under God, so to speak, away from the Jew.

Judgment, however, never closes the scene. As



we said, "glory touches judgment" in the ways of God. Judgment cleans out the vessel, and then glory fills it. It takes away what hinders the presence of the Lord, and then the kingdom is established and displayed, as Zephaniah, together with all the prophets, show us. The Apocalypse is the great closing witness of this. There, judgment makes way for glory again; and that, *finally*. In other words, that which offends and does iniquity, the great reprobate, apostate energies, are all judged and removed, and the day of millennium brightness begins to run its course. (Rev. vi.-xxii.)

It is judgment, judgment; overturn, overturn, overturn; in continuous succession, because no steward of God has been faithful, or given an account of his stewardship. (Ezek. xxi. 27.) Adam, the Jew, the Gentile, the candlestick, all, in their day, have been untrue to Him that appointed them; and "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, He judgeth among the gods." (Ps. lxxxii. 1.) The garden was lost by Adam; the land of their fathers by their children, or Canaan by Israel; the Gentile was as faithless as they, and power passed from the head of gold to the breasts and arms of silver, thence to the belly and thighs of brass, and then to the legs of iron, and the feet which were of iron and clay. (Dan. ii.) There was no *delivering up* to God of that which had been received from Him. The stewards have been removed, one after the other, and their stewardships have been taken away from them, in the stead of their delivering of them up, or giving a just account of them.

Thus it has ever been, and thus is it still, and there is no exception to this till we look at JESUS.

With Him all stewardships are accounted for; for all which is committed to Him in the due season is *delivered up*, and not *taken away*. And, what a volume, I may say, on the glories of Christ does that one sentence in 1 Cor. xv. write for us: "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God"! It signalizes Him in the face of the whole world, and in contrast with all the generations of the children of men, from the very beginning to the very end.

Every stewardship committed to others is taken away, because of the faithless hand that had betrayed it; but He delivers up His, as having fulfilled all the purpose of Him who had entrusted Him with it. In Christ, but in Christ only, all the promises of God are yea and amen. (2 Cor. i. 19, 20.) When He takes the kingdom He will at the end, or in due moment, "deliver it up." Precious words! But we see the kingdom taken away from Saul, and from the house of David; and then, when given to the Gentile, taken away from him in like manner, again and again, in a series of judgments or overturnings, till He come whose right it is; and then for the first time we get a stewardship accounted for, and a kingdom delivered up.

In this day of the Chaldean, on which we are now looking with Zephaniah, everything is, as it were, judged. As in the Apocalyptic day, or as before the great white throne (Rev. xx.), all is judged *personally or individually*, so now, in the light of the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, all is judged *nationally*. There is Judah, and there is Jerusalem; and the people around Edom, the Philistines, the Ammonites, the Ethiopians and

the Assyrians, north, south, east, and west, all come in for this common and complete exposure, and that, too, in all its minute distinctions. "The remnant of Baal," "the name of the Chemarims with the priests," idolaters, those who swear by the Lord and by Malcham, the backsliders and the careless, and those who wear "strange apparel," are all severally visited; and the candle of the Lord searches out those who are settled on their lees, and who despise the fear of judgment. (vv. 1-12.) Nothing escapes. All is naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Heb. iv. 13.) And the Judge of all the world does right; they that have deserved many stripes get them, while others are beaten with as few; for God is no respecter of persons. He renders to every man according to his deeds.

But, "the remnant according to the election of grace" are recognized here in Zephaniah, as everywhere. The "meek of the earth," they are called; and they are told to wait on the Lord under the hope that they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. (ii. 3; iii. 8.)

And then, as we said, glory comes in after judgment. Some features of millennial blessedness are presented to us. It is told us that with one lip or language the nations of that kingdom, "the world to come," shall worship the Lord the God of Israel. (iii. 9, 10.) The confusion of Babel shall be at an end; a sample of which was given at the Pentecost of Acts ii. The distant parts of the earth, those beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, shall take part in the common acknowledgment of the Saviour-God of Israel. Israel shall be purified, saved from all fear of evil any

more, and be glad with all the heart, because the Lord their God is in the midst of them. (iii. 14, 15.)

These are the days of the kingdom. The judgments have cleansed the scene, the remnant have been carried through them, the earth witnesses the salvation of God, and the Name of the Lord is owned in the joy and service of His restored people.

The mourners in Zion, moreover, have taken to them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The lamentations of Jeremiah are heard no more; for the captive daughter of Zion has been brought home with every band that was about her broken off; and she that was led a captive, of whom it was written, "This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after," is made "a name and a praise among all people of the earth." (iii. 20.)

Such things are here, in the third chapter of our prophet, and such things are the common themes of all the prophets, in anticipation of "the kingdom of the Lord" following upon "the day of the Lord."

Glory, however, shines here in one very attractive character. The harp of Zephaniah has one note of very peculiar sweetness. The personal delight of the Lord in His people is given to us in words which savour of the Song of Solomon itself in its rapture and affection: "The Lord thy God," it is said to Zion, "will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." (iii. 17.)

This is the Bridegroom rejoicing over the bride, as had been anticipated by Isaiah, long before this day of Zephaniah. (Isa. lxii. 5.) This is as if the Lord were taking the place which the

rapturous song of the King of Israel put Him into, when he says, "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" (Song of Sol. vii. 6.)

It is the *personal* joy of the Lord in His people that is thus anticipated by Zephaniah, the brightest, dearest article in all their condition. It may remind us of a little sentence in our own 1 Thess. iv.: "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." This is all that is said of us there, after our translation. Glories might have been detailed, and the various joy of the heaven of the Church; but it is only this, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." It is *personal*, like this passage in Zephaniah; but had we affection we should say it is chief in the great account of our blessedness.

One further thing I would notice. There are two suppers laid out before us in Rev. xix., the supper of "the Lamb," and the supper of "the great God." The supper of the Lamb is a scene of joy in heaven: blessed are they that are called to it. It is a marriage supper. The supper of the great God is the fruit of the solemn, terrific judgment that closes the history of the earth as it now is, the judgment of this present apostate world, when the carcasses of the confederated enemies of the Lord are made the food of the fowl of the air.

Ezekiel notices the last of these two suppers, and gives us as full a description of it as John in the Apocalypse. Zephaniah just glances at it as he passes on with his account of the acts of the Lord in the day of His wrath. (Ezek. xxxix.; Zeph. i. 7.)

"The day of the Lord is at hand," says Zephaniah; "for the Lord hath prepared a sacri-

fice, He hath bid His guests." (i. 7.) He does not, however, go into the scene as Ezekiel and John do. What the sacrifice or the feast is, and who the guests that are bidden to it may be, he does not let us know. For there are voices and under-tones in the perfect harmony of Scripture. Certain truths and mysteries are given a chief place here and there, while at other times the same truths are only assumed or passingly, incidentally, touched on. But all this does but yield us that grateful, artless unison, that lives in all the parts of the Book, giving us witness that it is but *one Hand* that sweeps all the chords of that wondrous harp which is the present "harp of God," till other harps be formed by the same hand to celebrate the glories of His own Name, and the fruit of His own work for ever. (Rev. xv. 2.)

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## Brief Remarks upon the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Revelation II. and III.

### II.

**A**S if He had said, I have gone through great tribulation for you; fear not to go through it for Me. I died for you; be faithful in death for Me. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (v. 10.)

Need we wonder at the quiet firmness and joy of many of the martyrs of Jesus when suffering for Him? The heathen used to be astonished at

the way they met death in its most frightful forms. "Death is no punishment to these Christians," they used to say, "for they die singing hymns, and declaring that they are going home to one Jesus, whom they believe to be in heaven."

PERGAMOS. In approaching Pergamos we feel as if the faithfulness and glory of Smyrna had departed. Here Christ presents Himself in a character entirely different from that of the presentation to Smyrna. "These things said He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." (v. 12.)

The "sword" is the symbol of the word of God. The Church has not only slipped away from the Person of Christ, but she is now getting away from the authority of His word. The frightful doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes are held. Accordingly the Lord says, "Repent: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against *them* with the sword of My mouth." (vv. 14, 15.)

Surely it is not difficult to see that the state of things in Pergamos shadows forth the alliance of the Church with the State under the Emperor Constantine. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." (v. 13.) Now she has got right into the world, and is associated with the very throne of Satan there. The Christian must ever be in one of two positions; namely, either in faithful separation from the world, and suffering from it; or associated with it and unfaithful.

If we look at this sad change in the light of worldly advantage to the Church, we may call it a happy change; but if we look at it in the light of spiritual loss, we shall pronounce it as the most sorrowful day in her entire history. Does not the apostle say of Christians, "I have espoused you

to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"? (2 Cor. xi. 2.)

And now what has she done? She has listened to the flatteries of the world, accepted its offers, and placed herself under its patronage. Yes; she who was in the days of her youth affianced to the Prince of heaven, has yielded to the seductions of the prince of this world.

Many good men, I know, have written and spoken of Constantine as if he had been the saviour of the Church. I take an entirely different view of the unhallowed union, and believe it was the day of her deepest fall, and deepest degradation. I would rather a thousand times see her dwelling in the catacombs than in the emperor's palace.

Persecution by the world seems not to have answered the end which Satan had in view, and he thought he would try something else. Under the spirit of persecution from without, the saints of God seem to have increased in numbers, spirituality, and unworldliness. Besides the immense numbers who suffered at the stake, modern industry has discovered something like seventy thousand epitaphs in the catacombs. There the followers of Jesus, of all ranks, were content to live, die, and be buried, rather than conform to the ways of the world.

But seduction has always been more fatal to the Church than persecution. She has been more blessed through her martyrs than her doctors. Still, there were those even in Pergamos who could not go with the multitude; and rich and sweet are Christ's promises to them. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man



knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (v. 17.) The *manna* may represent the lowly Jesus on earth; the *hidden manna*, the exalted Christ in the holiest of all; and the *white stone* and the *new name*, the secret link of personal communion and of His entire approbation.

THYATIRA. In the dark picture of Thyatira it is not difficult, I think, to see what are called "the middle ages." Those who have read the history of these dark ages will be at no loss to trace the likeness; especially from the eighth to the thirteenth century, and down to the dawn of the Reformation. The temporal dominion of the papacy dates from the eighth century. What centuries these were for wickedness of every kind! That which was allowed and openly practised in the professing Church is unfit to be named in a public lecture, or transferred to the pages of a Christian magazine. "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." (v. 20.)

Corruption, idolatry, and persecution characterise these dark ages. You may always be assured that, wherever you find Balaam, Jezebel is not far off. The prophet and the prophetess go together. He seduces the people of God to join with the world, but she is the mother of children like herself. She nurses in the bosom of the Church its vilest and most deadly foes. But the Lord hath said of such, "I will kill her children with death." (v. 23.) Dark as that period is, He sees all that is going on. "These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like unto fine

brass.” (vv. 18, 27.) This judgment shall be fully executed when Christ smites the nations with a rod of iron.

What we find in Thyatira is the natural consequence of the unholy alliance of Pergamos. The only true position of the Church in this world is separation from it, the witness of its ruin, and of the love that gave an only begotten Son to be the Saviour of the world. When she gives up this place she gives up everything as God’s witness on the earth. Let us never forget that our testimony as Christians should be according to the life we possess, the holiness we are partakers of, and the grace in which we stand. (1 John v. 11; Heb. xii. 10; Rom. v. 2.)

But as it was when Jezebel sat queen in Israel, so it is here. The Lord has many in Thyatira who have not bowed the knee to Baal. In this church the remnant is distinctly marked from the great body of mere professors. And here too we have set before the overcomers, as their blessed hope, the coming of the Lord; dominion over the nations; and, as a present, realised joy, “the Morning Star.” “But unto you I say, and unto the rest [the remnant] in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.” (vv. 24-29; xxii. 16.)

**SARDIS.** The difference between Sardis and Thyatira is most manifest. No one can fail to see that a great change has taken place. Balaam and Jezebel, those standing types of corruption and violence, are no longer before us. The condition of the professing Church in Protestant countries after the Reformation answers to Sardis. Outwardly everything is greatly improved; the idolatry, assumption, and persecution of the Church of Rome have disappeared. Still the state of Sardis is a deeply solemn one. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (iii. 1.)

Could anything be more solemn than this? "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Christians, of course, are not dead. But the system these are in has no vitality. This is what some have called the "visible" and the "invisible" Church; or the living ones in a system of dead formalism. True, the energy of evil has departed; but spiritual death has taken its place, an orthodox creed, and a cold, lifeless formalism. It is truly awful to think of such a state of things, and that we are in the midst of it.

The character in which the Lord presents Himself to Sardis not only reveals its state but cheers and encourages our hearts. "These things saith He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." (iii. 1.) The sevenfold fulness of spiritual life and power are with Him. We must look to Christ, and to Him alone. The fulness of inward light and outward power remain with Him.

For centuries before the Reformation, the Church ruled the world: afterwards the world was allowed to rule the Church; but some, not satisfied with either, said that the Church should rule

itself, and be the depositary of all needed gifts and supplies.

In none of these has Christ His right place; therefore all are wrong. The seven spirits of God, and the seven stars, are still with Him. He has not given up any of them. Even Timothy was instructed to commit *truth*, not *power*, to faithful men. Power always remains with Christ the Head in heaven. So we find that in His address to this Church, He calls them back to His truth and grace. "Remember therefore how thou hast *received and heard*, and hold fast, and repent." (v. 3.) Remember whose *word* thou hast heard, whose *grace* thou hast received. Hold fast truth and grace, and repent of thy formalism.

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

PHILADELPHIA. In the picture given of Philadelphia we see the true position of the church (or assembly) that would be a witness for Christ in the present day. The Reformation was a great and blessed work of God's Spirit; but the blessing was more individual than corporate. The great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith *alone*, was the means of delivering many souls. Glory be to God! His name have all the praise.

But many of the leaders of that blessed work, dear men of God though they were, and ever worthy of honour, fell into the mistake of connecting the work of God's Spirit with human governments. The result was that the professing

Church soon sank into a worldly, dead state. This is evident, not only from all history, but from the word of God. "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch," says Christ to Sardis, "I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." This is the way the Lord will come upon the world, and take it by surprise. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. v. 2, 3.) If the professing Church *will* associate itself with the world, it must share the world's doom.

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

The first thing to be carefully noted in meditating on the epistle to Philadelphia is the character in which Christ presents Himself. This is the key

to our understanding it. "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true." (Rev. iii. 7.) Everything in the Assembly of God should answer to this standard. This is what we find in Philadelphia. We are all too prone to be content with what suits ourselves, and to shrink from the pain and trouble of discipline. Whereas, we ought to think only of what is due to the character of Christ. "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true." Holiness and truth should be the great pillars of the Church's practice. Is it holy? Is it true? should be our constant inquiry. The Spirit of God, who abides with the Church for ever, is called both "the *Holy Spirit*," and "the *Spirit of truth*"; and this agrees with the whole analogy of Scripture. (John xiv. 17, 26.) In connection with the peace offering, which typifies the communion of saints, it was provided by a statute for ever, that only the children of the priest that were clean should eat of the sacrifice. "Every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it." (Lev. viii. 34; Num. xviii. 11.) And, again, as the Psalmist says, "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever." (Ps. xciii. 5.) Whatever we may say or do, this is the unchanged and unchangeable characteristic of the dwelling-place of God. Oh! that the beauties of holiness may ever shine brightly in each corner of His temple!

Not only does Christ reveal Himself in His personal glory to these faithful ones, but also in His divine power and authority. "These things saith He that . . . hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." He thus suits Himself to their condition and need.

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# 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).

## Three Grand Realities.

READ PSALM XXXII.

**I**N this lovely psalm we have God presented to us in three ways. First, we have Him as our Justifier; secondly, as our Hiding-place; thirdly, as our Guide.

Nor is it merely that God provides us with justification, security, and guidance; though even this were rich and abundant mercy and goodness. But there is far more than this. He Himself has become our Justifier, our Hiding-place, and our Guide. Wondrous provision of His grace!

Such is the moral grandeur of redemption, such the way in which the God of all grace has met our need. If God Himself is my Justifier, I must be perfectly justified. If He is my Hiding-place, I must be perfectly hidden. If He is my Guide, I must be perfectly guided.

Let us then, as guided by the light of Holy Scripture, and in dependence upon the teaching of

the Holy Spirit, proceed to consider, in the first place,

### GOD OUR JUSTIFIER.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

“Oh! the blessedness! Transgression forgiven; sin covered.” There is deeply imbedded in man’s religious mind the thought that he has to meet God as a Judge; that he, as a sinner, has in some way or another to satisfy the claims of a righteous Judge, who will deal with him about his sins, and exact the very last farthing. As the dying gipsy exclaimed, when told that he was standing at the very portal of the eternal world, “What! must I gang afore the Judge wi’ a’ my sins upon me?”

Tremendous inquiry! If I have to meet God as my Judge, it is all over with me. “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.” (Ps. cxliii. 2). Hence, therefore, a soul looking at God as a Judge must be filled with terror, inasmuch as he cannot answer Him one of a thousand. “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah vi. 6, 7).

You cannot meet God as a Judge. Condemnation must be the issue of a meeting between a righteous Judge and a guilty sinner.

But, thanks be to God, He wears another character now. He is a righteous Justifier. Yes, a Justifier of such as cannot meet Him as a Judge. God must be righteous in whatever sphere He



displays Himself. Whether as a Judge or a Justifier He must be **JUST**. But, in this day of grace, during the acceptable year, the day of salvation, He is revealing Himself as "a just God and a Saviour," a righteous Saviour-God. (Isa. xlv. 21, 22). What a glorious character! What a stupendous triumph of redeeming love! What a complete answer to Satan! What a healing balm for the convicted conscience and stricken heart!

A Saviour-God! It is the very title which suits a lost sinner. It brings God near to me in the very condition and character in which I find myself. If God is a Saviour, it is precisely what suits me as lost. If God is a Justifier, it is exactly what I need as guilty. None but a lost sinner can have to do with a Saviour-God. None but a guilty sinner can have to do with God as a righteous Justifier.

Nothing can be simpler. It places salvation and justification on a basis as simple as it is solid, and as solid as it is simple. God reveals Himself as a Saviour; the believing sinner walks in the light of that revelation, and is saved. God reveals Himself as a Justifier; the believing sinner walks in the light of that revelation, and is justified. He is saved and justified according to the perfect standard of God's revelation of Himself. It is impossible to stand on more solid ground, or occupy a more unassailable position than this. To touch the believer's salvation and justification is to mar the integrity of God's revelation. (Titus iii. 4, 6; Rom. viii. 33).

And let the anxious reader remember who it is that God justifies, for this point is only second in importance to the question of who is the Justifier. Whom, then, does God justify? Is it good people? Where are they? Is it those who have done their duty? Are any such to be found? Is it those who have fulfilled the law? Such would not need His

justification, seeing that the man that doeth these things shall live in them. (Gal. iii. 12).

If, therefore, a man could fulfil the law, he should have no transgression to be forgiven, no sin to be covered, and hence a Saviour-God, a righteous Justifier, is not for him. This is obvious. A man who has wrought out a legal righteousness does not want an evangelical one. "If righteousness come by law, Christ has died in vain." There was no use in His dying to get us righteousness, if it could be had some other way. (Gal. ii. 21).

Whom, then, does God justify? Hear it, anxious inquirer! He justifies the ungodly. Yes; such is the veritable language of Holy Scripture. "Now to him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt. But to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on Him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness *without* works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom. iv. 4-8).

Here then we get our answer, full, clear, distinct, and conclusive. Two characters are placed in contrast, namely, "him that *worketh*," and "him that *worketh not*," and this contrast completely upsets all man's thoughts. It could never have entered into man's mind to conceive that righteousness was to be had without working for it, that God could justify the ungodly.

And yet this is the very doctrine of Scripture. If man could get righteousness by working for it, then clearly it would not be divine righteousness, for the simplest of all reasons, that this latter is to "him that *worketh not*." If God reveals Himself as the Justifier of the ungodly, then it is a sheer

denial of the revelation for man to come before Him in any other character.

If I, as a sinner, bring my duties to God, I must meet Him as a Judge, for surely He must judge my duties to see if they are all right. But if I bring my sins to Him, He meets me as a Justifier, with a full and free forgiveness and an everlasting righteousness. The peculiar glory of the gospel is that it reveals God as the righteous Justifier of poor ungodly sinners.

This is a marvellous truth. And if it be asked, as surely it must, by every exercised conscience, On what ground does this grand reality hold good? the answer is as clear and satisfactory as the most anxious soul can possibly desire. It is this: God, as a Judge, dealt with my sins at the cross, in order that God as a Justifier might deal with me at heaven's side of the empty tomb of Jesus.

The death of Christ, therefore, forms the ground on which God can righteously justify the ungodly. A righteous Judge condemned sin on the cross, that a righteous Justifier might pardon and justify the guilty.

What a profound mystery! Well may angels desire to look into it; and well may sinners, whom it so blessedly concerns, bless and praise Him who has counselled, revealed, and wrought it all for them, through the accomplished atonement of Christ. (1 Peter i. 12.)

And here we would pause a moment in order to put a plain, pointed question to the reader. Dear friend, do know God as your Justifier? Or, are you still thinking of meeting Him as a Judge? Are you looking forward to the judgment-seat as the place where the question of your justification is to be settled?

If so, you must be miserable. You can never enjoy true peace until you know and believe that

God as a Judge has nothing against you as a sinner; nay more, that He Himself is your Justifier; that, in the death and resurrection of Christ, He has revealed Himself as "a just God and a Saviour" to you, an ungodly sinner.

This is the solid and unassailable ground of peace; and we most earnestly pray you to ponder it. If you are really anxious about your soul's salvation, you need not lay down this paper until you possess divine certainty that you are justified, and that God is your Justifier. Blessed certainty! May you know it now, through simply believing on Him who justifieth the ungodly, and you will then be able to follow us, with intelligence and comfort, while we dwell, in the second place, on

#### GOD OUR HIDING-PLACE.

It is a remarkable fact, that so long as the sinner is at enmity with God, he is at peace with himself; at peace with the world; at peace with the devil; but the moment he is brought into full peace with God, he is at war with himself, with the world, and with the devil. Hence, no sooner do I know God as my Justifier than I have to cope with a host of spiritual enemies, within and around. This makes me conscious of another need. I want a hiding-place into which I may retreat at all times, nay, rather, out of which I may never venture to show myself. Now, God is this Hiding-place. "Thou art my hiding-place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

What a difference between the condition of the soul here and in the third and fourth verses! "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

What a contrast between the "roaring" of a sin-burdened soul, fearing judgment, and the "songs of deliverance" of a justified soul, hidden in God! And yet it is far better to roar in disquietude of spirit, than to cry, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." True anxiety is vastly to be preferred to a false peace.

But the believer has neither the one nor the other. His anxiety has been hushed into truthful repose by the knowledge of God as his Justifier and Hiding-place; and therefore instead of the roarings of disquietude, he can sing songs of deliverance. Blessed exchange! Instead of crying out, "Oh! the wretchedness!" he can sing aloud, "Oh! the blessedness!" "Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." "If God be for us, who can be against us!" "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Now thanks be to God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place."

These are some of the "songs of deliverance" with which a Saviour-God doth compass about His justified and hidden ones. Would that we were more filled with them! Alas! that we should be more characterized by murmurings and complainings, than by songs of triumph. Surely, if we would but ponder our mercies and blessings more deeply, our songs would be more abundant. Who have such reason to be glad as those who are justified by, and perfectly hidden in, God?

But we must close this paper by a brief reference to the third point in this lovely scripture, namely,

#### GOD OUR GUIDE.

This we may truly say is a grand reality. Yes, and we want it as we pass along through the laby-

rinths of this wilderness-world, in this day of perplexity and confusion. We want a Guide, and God has undertaken to fill that office for us. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

What precious grace! It is as though our God would meet us at each stage of our path, and manifest Himself in the very character in which we need Him. When bowed down with guilt, and roaring in disquietude, our bones waxing old, and our moisture dried up, He shines before us as our Justifier, our Saviour-God, pardoning our transgressions, and covering our sins. When surrounded by hosts of spiritual enemies, who would crush us in a moment, He opens His bosom to us, and invites us to find, in Himself, a retreat and a hiding-place from them all; so that, instead of feeling ourselves compassed with foes, we are compassed with songs. And, finally, when called to pass through scenes of confusion and perplexity, He, in infinite grace, stands before us and says, "I will guide thee." What precious grace, nearness, intimacy!

And mark the way He guides. "I will guide thee with *mine eye*." This, as we know, is the most tender, delicate, and affectionate description of guidance. We must be very intimate with a person, and very near him, in order to be guided by the movement of his eye. It is a far more refined and exquisite sort of guidance than the movement of hand, or the sound of the voice. I must be gazing directly into a person's face in order to catch the glance of his eye; and I must be intimately acquainted with his wishes and his ways, in order to interpret the glance and act upon it.

Oh, that we entered more fully into all this! Would that the guidance of our Father's eye were ever sufficient for us! Would that we could just place our hand in His, and, gazing up into His

countenance, be ever guided by the movement of His eye! Then would our path be clear and safe, simple and happy. We should not, like the impetuous "horse," or the obstinate "mule," require the "bit and bridle" of circumstances; but through communion with His mind we should know His will. How often are we at a loss as to our path! How often are we ill at ease! And why? Because the guidance of the eye is not understood. We ask God for guidance in reference to movements which He does not want us to make, and as to paths in which He does not want us to tread.

"I don't know which way to turn," said someone lately to a Christian friend.

The reply was a very simple one: "*Don't turn at all.*"

Just so. If you don't see your way as to moving, it is very obvious you should stand still.

May all the people of God be enabled, by His Spirit, to walk as justified ones, to abide in their Hiding-place, and follow their Guide!

## **Brief Remarks upon the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Revelation II. and III.**

### **III.**

**W**HAT a blessed thing it is for us thus to know the Lord in His moral glory and almighty power! It draws out the heart to Him in truest worship. He has the key of David, according to the ancient prophecy: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder; so He shall open, and none shall shut; and He shall shut, and none shall open." (Isa. xxii. 22.) Thus all the treasures, all the resources, of the royal house of David are under His hand, and at His disposal. May we ever be kept close to Him who has "the key of David"!

How sweetly all this reminds us of His own lowly path of love, when it was said, "To Him the porter openeth." (John x. 3.) The enemy sought to shut Him out everywhere, from the great "inn" of the world to the end of His path, when He suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem. (Luke ii. 7; John xix. 20.) But God opened the door to Him, and He found His way to the poor, and the most hidden, of the flock. What can be more blessed than to have Him for our pattern in our pilgrim path? May we think more of this, and seek to be more conformed to Him.

"I know thy works," He says, but He does not say what they are. Enough for our hearts that He knows all about us. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." (v. 8.)



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

What a beautiful combination we have here ! “ For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.” These three things open a wide and rich field for contemplation; but at present we can only draw your attention to them. He who would know the mind of the Lord as to His Assembly should examine them carefully. The Philadelphians were without influence or note or power in the world; but they had what is far, far better : they were in fellowship with Him who carries the key that opens every door of service and every treasure of blessing. And they kept close to His word, and did not deny His name. The *word* of the Lord is our only security and authority at all times, but especially in an evil time; and the *name* of the Lord is our only true centre of gathering, bond of union, and power in worship and discipline; and the Holy Spirit, present with us, is our only *strength* in the midst of such outward weakness. “ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. xviii. 20.)

That which gives a peculiar charm to the posi-

tion of the saints in Philadelphia is that they are like what Christ Himself was when here on earth. He never had influence or power in this world, but He could say, "Thy law is within my heart," and His first care was the glory of His Father's name. (Ps. xl. 8; John xii. 28.) And what, we would ask, in all Christendom, could please the heart of Christ like seeing the reflection of Himself, as the rejected Man, in His people? Nothing; no, nothing! Would to God it were more true, and more manifest. His experience in that mysterious path of love will be remembered with praise and thanksgiving for ever. He will never grow weary of singing with His saints in heaven the song of His lonely sorrow on earth. "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath He hid His face from him; but when he cried unto Him, He heard. My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation." (Ps. xxii. 24.) Oh! with what rapture this song will be sung in heaven when Christ in Person leads it! The thought of it makes us long for that day of glory. Till then may we be found walking in His steps, and not ashamed of His rejection.

As Christ Himself was despised, and never understood when in this world, so a remnant (as are all true Philadelphians), must expect to be despised. It was so of old when those who returned from the captivity were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. "Even that which they build," said Tobiah, "if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." But Jehovah was a wall of fire around His feeble remnant, and they had nothing to fear from their enemies. (Neh. iv. 3, 4.)

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of

Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." (v. 9.) This is a remarkable word, but the Lord hath spoken it. The haughty formalists of Sardis shall yet bow in homage at the feet of the now despised Philadelphians, and confess that he is loved and honoured by the Lord.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon all the earth." (v. 10.) Many good men have said that the Church shall pass through the great tribulation. But, if I rightly understand this verse, Christ says, No. He does *not* say, I also will keep thee when thou passest *through* it, but, I also will keep thee *from* it. He will take the Church up to be with Himself in heavenly glory. The rapture of the saints will take place before that dreadful "hour of temptation" spoken of in this verse.

Why honest and diligent students of Scripture should have made such a mistake, is hard to say; unless it be that they do not see the distinction which Scripture makes between the Jewish remnant and the Church of God. If such think that our Lord is speaking about the Church in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, then the mistake could be accounted for, though we might wonder how anyone could discover the Church there.

At all events, He says plainly enough to the Church here, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Nothing, we think, could be more distinct or conclusive. He does not even say, I will keep thee

from the *temptation*; but from the "hour," the time, the period, when it shall prevail in its many forms. And the word "temptation" being used here may include the time of the "strong delusion" of 2 Thess. ii. 11, which we believe shall immediately precede what may be called more strictly the "great tribulation" which, in Matthew xxiv., is spoken of as a tribulation without parallel, and as in connection with the Jews.

Again, in Revelation vii., there is the "great tribulation" spoken of in connection with the Gentiles. But in the passage before us, the language is wider far. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come on *all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth.*"

The heart must be perverse indeed, that refuses to receive such plain statements, such thoughtful, tender, loving promises. The Lord, I have no doubt, will maintain the testimony of Philadelphia, as to Himself, down to the eve of that awful time; but from the delusions and seductions, as well as persecutions of all kinds, in a word, "from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world," He will keep the Bride of His love. Blessed be His great and holy Name! May we firmly believe and hold fast by *His* word, whatever men may say.

"Behold, I came quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (v. 11.) He threatens to come on Sardis as a thief; He comes to Philadelphia with a crown. And He comes with it Himself. "I will keep thee." "*I*"; "*thee.*" The coming of our Lord in grace to take us to Himself, before the hour of temptation, is the true hope and crown of the Church which is His body and bride.

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.” (v. 12.)

Those who have taken the place of *weakness* here, but of holy firmness against evil, shall be made *pillars* there. And because they denied not His *name* here, He will write His own *new* name upon them there. The scene which He here opens up to the overcomers is *glory*, the New Jerusalem, that which will follow His coming for them. And how precious that little word, “My,” that blessed connecting link! “My word,” “My name,” “My patience,” “My God,” and “My new name.” Who would not desire above all earthly honours, privileges, or advantages, to be in the position of the Philadelphians, and waiting for the Lord from heaven?

LAODICEA. In Laodicea we see that which follows Philadelphia, and grows out of it. We could not have had the lukewarmness of Laodicea from the deadness of Sardis. There must be heat as well as cold to produce lukewarmness. On the state of things in Laodicea, important as it is in its own place, I confess to a willingness to be brief. The eye naturally turns away from a picture so painful, after dwelling so long on one so beautiful. The Lord does not appear before us here as in Philadelphia. There it was Himself in the beauties and attractions of His Person morally, and with the key of power waiting to serve them. Here He presents Himself as “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the begin-

ning of the creation of God.” (v. 14.) This sounds like the doom of Christendom. Her end, her awful end, has come. Where the light has been greatest, the judgment will be heaviest. He comes Himself, as the faithful witness, to take her place. *She* has completely failed, and long been unfaithful; but He will verify the whole truth of God, and take His place in the new creation.

Indifference to truth, latitudinarianism, was the sin of Laodicea. It is the sin of the “last days.” It is nauseous to Christ, and will bring His final judgment on the professing Church. “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” (vv. 15, 16.)

These are strange words for the lips of Jesus, and strong words for Him to use about that which still calls itself by His name. But indifference to truth, after it has been known, is unbearable to Him. They are not ignorant. There is heat and cold, truth and error, in Laodicean lukewarmness. They profess to be rich in truth and in all spiritual things. “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” (v. 17.) There may be a measure of zeal for spiritual things, a certain warmth and ardour for such things as the circulation of the Scriptures, missions, and the like; and also a certain measure of truth known, such as the Philadelphians teach and practise, and which is so far liked; but when they see where the truth will lead to, if faithfully carried out, they hesitate, draw back, sink into a cold indifference, and become “lukewarm,” “neither cold nor hot.” Christ can endure it no longer. Christendom must be cast out.

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# 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).

## Purpose, Promise, Perseverance, and Possession.

(Read Joshua xiv. 6-12.)

“We are saved by hope”; but hope is divine certainty, because it is connected with the purpose of God. All His own counsel is before God, and it shall stand. He has measured the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment by the resources of His own grace, His own wisdom, and His own strength. Neither the frailty of the creature, nor the power of the adversary, shall prevent the blessing of those who are “the called according to the purpose of God. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” It is this result of the purpose of God which is the object of the hope of the Christian.

It is not the hope of forgiveness of sins, neither the hope of righteousness, nor the hope of eternal life, properly; for the hope of which the apostle speaks is based on these wondrous blessings, which are already secured by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing short of these blessings can result from the work of the Holy Ghost, at one and the same time communicating life to the soul, and presenting Jesus to it as the object of faith. If there be uncertainty of hope, it is because the soul is not really reposing on Christ Himself and His perfect work. Whenever this is the case (and how common it is, alas! we too well know), the thing hoped for is the ascertainment of forgiveness of sins and righteousness, instead of pardon and righteousness being the groundwork of hope.

But real, scriptural hope (being the expectation of that, in manifestation, which is already known in the consciousness of the soul by faith, yea, and enjoyed, too, by the Spirit) is necessarily connected with patience. "Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we *with patience* wait for it." (Rom. viii. 24, 25.) When Christ shall appear, not only will the saints appear with Him in glory, but their longings for the full enjoyment, without any hindrance, of that which is theirs already shall be fully realised.

But notwithstanding the certainty and blessedness of our hope, it has pleased our



God, who knows the cravings of that life which is communicated by the Holy Ghost, and flows from union with our risen and glorified Head, to make provision for the sustainment and encouragement of our souls by giving to us the Holy Ghost as the earnest of the inheritance. He is not the earnest so much in the way of leading our souls from what we do taste now to what we may expect to taste when we are in glory; but it is rather in the way of the divine certainty of those things which God has prepared for them that love Him that He *now* gives the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. The light in which we regard the truth of the earnest of the Spirit will make a great difference as to the stability of our souls.

This relation of the Holy Ghost to us is distinct from those spiritual instincts which He Himself has communicated. Being given as the earnest, in consequence of the certainty of the determinate counsel of God in bringing those whom He has called to glory, He is at once the Spirit of revelation to show to us the things which are freely given to us of God, and the Spirit of communion, so as to enjoy all that which He thus shows us; but at the same time He is Himself the earnest, which never could have been given, save as the witness of accomplished redemption, and because of the certainty of future glory. It is thus that so many blessings, which, as to actual manifestation and real unhindered enjoyment, are yet future, are spoken of most truly as present.

This blessed truth might be largely illustrated. In one sense, we wait for our blessings; in another, we have them already. The manifestation of our sonship is yet future; but we wait not to be sons. "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be [rather, what we shall be hath not yet been manifested]: but we know that, when He shall appear [be manifested], we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 1.) But Christ has already *manifested* Himself to us, although He be not manifested to the world. So again, He is gone to prepare *mansions* for us in the Father's house, and we expect that He will come again, and receive us unto Himself; that where He is, there we may be also. This is the the characteristic hope of the Church; but mark "the earnest" resulting from this certain hope: "If a man love Me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode [mansion] with him." Most blessed earnest: the Father and the Son, now in the unity of the Spirit, making their mansion with us! We *are* sons, *waiting* for the adoption. Strange language! yet how real. We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body; because to be in a glorified body, like Christ Himself, with Christ in heaven, is the proper suited place for the sons of God. But because of this, being born of God now, *we are* sons, and God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying

“Abba, Father.” Observe, the Spirit is not given to make us sons, but because we are sons; and although not actually in our native home, yet God enables us to speak, and think, and act as His sons, although we are as unknown to the world as Jesus Christ Himself was while He was in the world.

We need faith, for “we walk by faith”; we need hope, “for we are saved by hope”; but we need also the Holy Ghost Himself as the present earnest of our inheritance, lest we faint and grow weary by the way. Grace and glory are two consecutive links in the golden chain of God; but, for the most part to us, there is practically an interval filled up by painful experience on our part, and yet such experience as causes us to learn grace now, “manifold grace,” in a manner we could hardly learn it in glory, just as assuredly we shall learn it in glory, even “the riches of grace,” after a manner inconceivable by us at present. The joyous triumphant song of Israel on the banks of the Red Sea, witnessing the grace and power of God in their deliverance from Egypt, stopped not short of their immediate introduction into Canaan. The Holy Ghost who indited that song could not celebrate the unbelief of Israel, but the grace, power, and faithfulness of God. “Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation. The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on *the inhabitants of Palestina*. Then the dukes of Edom

shall be amazed: the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all *the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.*" (Exod. xv.)

There was no reason why deliverance out of Egypt should not have been introduction into Canaan; the grace and power which had effected the one was pledged for the accomplishment of the other, and could alone effect it. But how different is the actual experience of God's people, whether typically redeemed as Israel, or really as the Church, from the truth of God, which either may celebrate! Israel trembled before those whom they mentioned in their song as melting away before them. And the whole wilderness history intervenes between deliverance from Egypt and introduction into Canaan. And we ourselves also often tremble before already conquered enemies, triumphing by faith the moment we bring in God as manifested in Christ, but often dropping the notes of triumph for murmurs or fears, because the heart is not really occupied with the things freely given to us of God.

It is truly refreshing, in the sorrowful history of Israel in the wilderness, to find such a one as Caleb. He is not one of the great public actors, as Moses, Aaron, or Joshua. One of the "heads of the children of Israel," of the honoured tribe of Judah, he was going the weary round of the wilderness with his brethren, but assuredly with lighter heart and firmer step than they. In this respect he blessedly illustrates what the

earnest of the Spirit is, and at the same time is a type of that class of "unknown," "yet well known," Christians who, apart from murmuring and strife, are steadily wending their way to that rest of which the Lord Himself has spoken to them.

Historically, Caleb presents to us a feature which we find not in Moses himself. He had known Egypt for the first forty years of his life, he had trodden Canaan forty days, he had gone through the wilderness, and had passed over Jordan into the possession of Canaan, and was still full of manly vigour and courage. He was one of those who, through faith, had obtained promises, and was not satisfied till he was in actual possession.

"On the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt," Moses and Aaron number Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, "every male by their polls, from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel." (Num. i. 1-4.) Again, "after the plague," in which twenty-four thousand perished in the matter of Baal-peor, Moses and Eleazar the priest number Israel in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho; "but among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of

Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.”  
(Num. xxvi. 1, 4, 64, 65.)

While this verified the word of God, we may still ask, What hindered Caleb and Joshua from being worn out by the trial of the wilderness, which had worn out all their generation? Let Caleb himself answer. “Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and *I brought him word again as it was in mine heart.* Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: *but I wholly followed the Lord my God.* And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as *He said*, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: *as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.* Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: *if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.*” (Josh.

"I brought him word again as it was in mine heart." Caleb owned that it was a pleasant land which the Lord gave to the children of Israel, and *his heart* was set unto it. He could discern the difference between that land and Egypt; between the land which was cultivated with all the appliance of human skill, "watered with the foot," and "a land of hills and valleys, which drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." His treasure was in the land, and there his heart was. Others esteemed Egypt preferable to the wilderness, when their hearts were discouraged from going up to possess Canaan, on account of the difficulties in the way; but Caleb esteemed Canaan, with all the difficulty of entering into it, as far more precious than Egypt with present ease, but with present bondage also. Canaan was in his heart all the time he traversed the wilderness. He had tasted the fruit of Canaan; his eyes had beholden it; and he had not the report of others as to the land, but *his own* "feet had trodden it." It was this which made him tread the wilderness with such elastic steps. Besides this, he had the sure word of the Lord's promise to support him. He knew the certain end unto which his wanderings, in company with others, must lead. As they encamped or broke up, at the commandment of the Lord, he could either "rest in his tent," or traverse the wilderness

with the land in his heart, and say, after every weary march or lengthened encampment, The wilderness time is far spent; the day of again seeing the land is at hand. As his contemporaries wasted away, how solemn must have been the admonition to his soul against the sin of unbelief; how forcibly must the rapid passing away of that evil generation have brought these words to his remembrance: "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and *hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.*"

"God hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This was the comfort, strength, and establishment of apostles, as well as of common Christians. Christ Himself, to whom the Spirit ever bears witness, is thus not only the object of faith, but the object of desire also. It is as the object of desire that He is known now in earnest by the Spirit. Experimentally, He is never known by the soul in all His own attractive loveliness until He be received as "all our salvation." The selfish heart of man cannot bear to contemplate such perfection, condemnatory of itself, until that lawful, selfish



craving is answered, "What must I do to be saved?" by, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." We can only study Him by knowing Him as the Saviour. But when He is so known; what graciousness do we find in His own word: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." He comes now into the heart by the Spirit: blessed earnest indeed of His coming for us, to be with Him where He is. It is thus, too, that the apostle speaks to us: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And *if Christ be in you,*" &c. Well indeed says another: "Whom not having seen, ye love; in whom, though *now* ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." If the Spirit of God shows to us the things which are freely given to us of God, He shows them not as in the distant future, but being Himself the earnest of the inheritance, He now glorifies Jesus, taking of His things and showing them unto us, and showing them as ours now in Him, so that we can taste and handle our own blessings. We too are solemnly warned as to the evil of unbelief in finding many an object to which we have fondly clung passing away, so that bitter disappointment would ensue were it not that by the Spirit we more fully realised, and were led more deeply to taste, the unfailing blessings which are ours in Christ.

“Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: *but I wholly followed the Lord my God.*” It is no presumption in any of us to answer to the testimony of God to our own souls. So did Caleb; for the Lord said, “But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and *hath followed Me fully.*” Caleb had searched the land, following the Lord his God there, when the Lord Himself was his guide and defence, and no enemy could set upon him. He had seen that the land “was exceeding good”; but he reckoned on the good pleasure of the Lord in His people. “If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us.” The soul of Caleb rested entirely on the grace and power of God, which had caused them to triumph at the Red Sea, and had kept the spies in searching the land. The same grace and power could alone lead them into possession of the land. On this, and this alone, he reckoned. Only let his soul recognise where the Lord was, and he could see victory. But the very same principle of fully following the Lord, which made him encourage the people to go up, would hinder him from the attempt, after that the Lord had said, “To-morrow turn again the way of the Red Sea”; for the Lord had no delight in the people. Where the Lord was there was both grace and power; and Caleb had to learn *that* grace and power for forty years in the wilderness on which he had so early reckoned, and which eventually put him in

actual possession of the very part of the land which he had trodden with his feet. He fully followed the Lord through the wilderness, and knew Him there as his guardian and guide whom he had known as a mighty deliverer out of Egypt, and who had introduced him into Canaan, and enabled him to see and search the land and know its fruits.

The Spirit of God is presented to us in direct contrast with the spirit of the world. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." (1 Cor. ii. 13.) The spirit of the world is one of restless activity and enquiry, either to find out something new, or to invent some remedy against the multiform misery of man. It may take either a speculative or a practical turn, but it never discovers *the* satisfactory remedy. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" The spirit of the world is ever advancing, but never reaching its end; leading ever to that which is coming, but never yet has come. The Spirit which is of God is the very opposite. The Holy Ghost produces in the saint "the spirit of a sound mind." He leads the soul backward to the past, and forward to the future. He steadies the soul by leading it to repose on the already

accomplished work of Christ on the cross; and from thence He animates the soul, by leading it into the glorious prospect set before it, a prospect not of some yet undiscovered panacea for man's misery that is found in the past in the cross of Christ, neither of a vague and ignorant futurity, but that "hidden wisdom of God, concerning things which God has prepared before the foundation of the world to our glory, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, but which God hath revealed to us by His Spirit." The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, and can never have a higher subject of testimony than He has at present; namely, the sufferings of Christ and the glory which is to follow. He cannot reveal to us higher blessings than He reveals at present; and He Himself is the present earnest in the heart of the believer, because those blessings are so certain, and already secured in Christ.

"And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said." The Holy Spirit, as the earnest, is the Spirit "of promise"; not only as being Himself the "promise of the Father," but substantiating promises to the soul. As Caleb saw his contemporaries die off day by day, how much he needed the encouragement of the specific promise of the Lord: "The Lord hath kept me alive, as He said." The Holy Ghost is the quickener, He is the earnest, and He is also the Holy Spirit of promise, thus giving special value to the Word, to the Scriptures, bringing it to re-

membrance, and applying a familiar text with unknown power, because such a promise or such a scripture exactly suits the circumstances of our need.

"As He said." How important is this! Subjection of mind to the authority of Scripture no less distinguishes the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the spirit of the world than it distinguishes real spirituality from cloudy mysticism. Scripture becomes of increasing value in proportion as the spirit of the age advances. As applied by the Spirit of truth, it gives the consciousness of certainty when the spirit of the world, in the freedom of enquiry, is leading into general scepticism. The result of these two conflicting spirits, the spirit of the world and the Spirit which is of God, is that the one will lead to set the stability of created things against the promise of Christ coming; the other, to throw the soul more entirely on His promise. (2 Peter iii.) But the soul needs now establishment and encouragement, and the Holy Ghost, as the earnest, gives such a reality to the promises of God in Scripture, that the soul is enabled to set, "As He says," against all appearances of things or opinions of men.

"As my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." All the weary round of forty years of toil in the wilderness had not impaired the strength of Caleb. He had sung that wondrous note, "The Lord is my strength." He had acted on that strength when he searched the land, and was ready,

at the prime of manhood, to go up and possess the land; and now, at fourscore and five years, he finds his strength the same. The Lord was his strength. And what is the Holy Ghost to us in one aspect as the earnest but "the Spirit of power"? In the strictest sense, the power which acts towards us and in us is always the same. But it is only known by faith; even "the exceeding greatness of the power of God answering to that which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." If we attempt the smallest difficulty without regard to this power, we are foiled; but if the greatest obstacle presents itself, through faith in the Lord our strength we prevail. Hence the word, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

The characteristic form of power now is *endurance*. It is by *patient* continuance in well-doing that we seek for glory, honour, and immortality. The spirit of the world is that of impatience with delay, and desire of grasping some supposed present blessing; but the Spirit which is of God, being Himself the earnest of a certain inheritance, becomes especially the Spirit of power in enabling us patiently to wait for what is ours already. It is thus that, although "the outer man may decay, the inner is renewed day by day." The Holy Ghost keeps the eye looking on invisible realities, making them, as it were, more palpable day by day, as each day brought Caleb nearer to Canaan, which was "in his heart."

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# 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).

## Reflections on the Book of Haggai.

**T**HIS book is a witness how rapidly declension sets in, and fresh corruption follows upon restoration and blessing.

Return to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon was made at the opening of the Book of Ezra, *with great brightness and promise*. Thousands left Babylon; and those who remained behind helped them with their goods; and a general awakening of the national heart and energy was known.

The first business of the returned captives was to build the house of the Lord; and they laid the foundation of it in the midst of such mingled and diverse affections, as showed how thoroughly and personally they had set themselves to it. Tears and joys, shouts and wailings, told the

living realities of the moment, and gave promise that an earnest-hearted work, then begun, would find its way happily and prosperously to the end.

But it was not so. The promise was not made good. Is man's pledge, and promise, and stewardship ever realized?

The Gentile seed which had been planted in the lands of the Ten Tribes became the occasion of hindrance and difficulty; and the building of the house is suspended, and that, too, for so long a time as fourteen years; during which interval, self-indulgence and consultation about their own things marked the moral ways of the people, of that people who had started so earnestly and so single-heartedly.

Under such conditions, the Spirit of God visits Haggai, and by him the word of the Lord addresses itself to Zerubbabel, the child of Judah, and to Joshua, the high priest, and to the congregation of returned captives.

It was in the second year of Darius, king of Persia, that Haggai was thus called forth by the Spirit. This notification of time has meaning in it. It bespeaks the degradation of Israel. The coin of the Roman is by and by to go current through the land, and Israel will then be taught by their hand to accept that badge of their vassal-state; and so now the Spirit teaches them the like lesson, marking the eras of their history by the reign of the Persian. (i. 1.)

Haggai begins by challenging the people on account of their neglect of God's house, and concern about their own houses, and he calls on them to take knowledge of their present condition as the consequence of this, and to mark how unequal the fruit they were gathering out of



their fields and vineyards was to the toil they had spent upon them. (i. 2-6.) And, under this rebuke, the people are brought afresh to the fear of God; and fear being awakened, the conscience being reached, the fallow-ground of nature ploughed up, the same voice of God by Haggai begins its ministry of comfort and encouragement. "I am with you, saith the Lord." (i. 13.)

But the Spirit visited the heart of the people, as well as the lips of the prophet, and the end of the ministry was therefore reached. "And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God." (i. 14.)

*The heart of Lydia*, in other days, was opened by the Lord, as well as *the lips of Paul* that spoke to her. He spoke to her, and she attended to him; and both of these things were of God. How simple, and yet how needful! The Lord lets us know the need of each of those operations in His great discourse in John vi., teaching us that if the Father gave not to the Son, if He draw not, if He teach not, the ministry will be lost upon the soul, and the bread of life, the true manna of the desert, will be spread in vain. (vv. 37, 44, 45, 48-51.)

Now, this was a revival. And reviving of God's work in the midst of the years became the necessary way, because of the tendency to decline which is found to be in us. The sinner's utter ruin, and full incompetency to restore himself, is the ground of needed sovereignty at the first (Isaiah i. 9); the saint's or the Church's tendency

to slacken, to grow cold and dull, becomes the like ground of renewed, repeated revivals afterwards. A fresh putting forth of reviving virtue has been ever the way of maintaining a dispensation in any condition worthy of itself. And this day of Haggai was one of those revival seasons.

The subject of this prophetic work by Haggai might lead us to observe how perfect in their seasons the divine thoughts and purposes are, though so various and different. David proposed to build a house for the ark of God, a house of cedars, costly and stable; but the word of a prophet forbade him. The time had not come. There would have been moral unfitness in the ark taking its rest before Israel had reached theirs; or seating itself in a sure dwelling-place in a land as yet unpurged of the blood of the sword of battle.

But in the day of Haggai we find the contrary of all this. Israel are rebuked by a prophet for *not* building the house of the Lord. David erred in saying that the time had come for such a work. The returned captives now err in saying that the time had not come. And the Spirit of the Lord knew the time, and what Israel ought to do, whether to build or not to build. God "is the Rock, His work is perfect." He is true, though every man be a liar. (Deut. xxxii. 4 )

But again, as we find also in the Book of Ezra, the returned captives had refused the Samaritans, rejected alliance with people of such mixed blood and principles. They had done rightly in this; surely they had. They had kept themselves pure. But this was a provocation, and under the suggestions of those Samaritan

adversaries, the great king, the Persian "breast of silver," had stopped the building of the house.

This, however, becomes a temptation. As soon as their hands get free of the work of the Lord's house, the people go every one to his own house. How easy to understand this! Nature is ready to take all its advantages. We know this every day. But faith acts above nature. Paul, for instance, becomes a prisoner after he had been for years a servant. His activities abroad are stopped by the adversaries. But Paul, though a prisoner, though stopped in his work abroad, waits on the same Master still. There is prison-service, as well as field or pulpit-service. He will receive, at his own hired house, all that come to him, though he be in chains, and talk with them from morning till evening, expounding and testifying the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. This was faith, not nature. But the returned captives employ their hands for themselves; tied up from working in God's house, they use them, as free, for the work of their own house; and thus Satan masters them as well as the Samaritans. And it is upon this condition of things the Lord breaks in by the voice of Haggai.

The building of the house, as I observed, seems to have been suspended for about fourteen years; but it is very happy to find that it was resumed, not by force of a decree in its favour by the great king, the Persian who had rule over the Jews at that time, but by the voice of the prophets of God, Haggai and Zechariah. The Lord, indeed, did dispose the heart of the king; but this was not till His prophet had disposed the heart of Israel. (Ezra v., vi.). And this is very much to

be remembered in connection with our prophecy. The fresh spring in the heart of the people was found to have been in *God*, and not in *circumstances*.

It was God's voice by His prophets that set them to work again, and not the royal favour of the Persian. The Lord turned the heart of the king, their master, to countenance them, when they had taken again the place of faith and obedience.

Haggai is simply styled "Haggai the prophet." We have nothing about him more than that. The word of the Lord was delivered by him on several distinct occasions; but all in the second year of Darius, the king of Persia: and all was directed to this end, to set agoing and to further the building of the house of the Lord.

I can look at them only in the most general way, noticing the time of each, during the second year of Darius the Persian.

6th month, 1st day. Haggai arouses the careless, self-indulgent people, the returned remnant, who were neglecting the Lord's house, and serving themselves.

6th month, 24th day. He promises them that the Lord will be with them; thus, as in the Name of the Lord, appreciating the fear that had been awakened; and consequently the people begin to work.

7th month, 21st day. In order to encourage them in their work, Haggai tells them that the final glory of the house which they had now begun to build should be the brightest after the shaking of all things by the hand of the Lord.

9th month, 24th day. He leads the people to a humbling sense of what they had been before

the house of the Lord was attended to; but he tells them also of future blessing.

Same day. He addresses Zerubbabel, telling him again of the shaking of everything, and of the establishing of Zerubbabel as the Lord's signet.

These are his utterances in their seasons. The voice of the Lord by this prophet first awakens the conscience of the people, and then, in various ways of grace, encourages them in their revived condition and energy.

Let me observe that the Spirit of God in the prophet does not take part, either with the aged men, who wept over the remembrance of *the past*, or with the younger ones who were rejoicing in *the present* (Ezra iii.), but He bears the heart of the people on to *the future*. Those tears had been real, as was their service to God: but neither were perfect. The Spirit who leads according to God indulges neither, but carries heart and hope forward. Encouraging the people in their work by His servant, He tells them of the future glory of the house, and of the stability of the true Zerubbabel, when all that has its foundation in the first creation, be it what it may, shall be shaken to its removal and overthrow.

The Spirit again, in an apostle, comments upon this word of the prophet. (Heb. xii.) He tells us that all that which is to be shaken is "all that is made"; that is, as I judge, all that has not its root or its foundation in Him in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen. (2 Cor. i. 19, 20.) He only is the Rock. His work is perfect. Christ the Lord can say, and will say, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it." (Ps.

lxxv. 4.) What is of Him cannot be shaken. It remains. And in the faith and hope of what we have in Him, and from Him, beloved, let us say to one another, in the words of the apostle, "We, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. xii. 28.)

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## **An Eternal Principle of Truth.**

**I**T is at once interesting and instructive to mark the varied lines of truth presented in the New Testament, all finding their common centre in that blessed One who is the truth.

We see this both in the Gospels and in the Epistles. Each of the four evangelists, under the direct guidance and power of the Holy Ghost, gives us a distinct view of Christ.

Matthew presents Him in His Jewish relations, as the Messiah, the Son of David, Son of Abraham; heir of the promises made to the fathers.

Mark presents Him as the earnest Workman, the diligent Servant, the laborious Minister, the incessant Preacher and Teacher.

Luke gives us "the Man Christ Jesus," in His human relations, Son of man, Son of Adam.

John is occupied with the Son of God, Son of the Father, the heavenly Man, in His heavenly relationships.

Thus each one has his own specific line. No two are alike, but all agree. There is lovely variety, but the most perfect harmony; there is diversity and unity. Matthew does not interfere with Mark; nor Mark with Luke; nor Luke with

John. There is no collision, because each moves in his own proper orbit, and all revolve round the one grand centre, CHRIST JESUS.

Nor could we do without any one of the four. There would be a serious blank if one were missing. We could not afford to give up a single ray of the moral glory of the Son of God; and not only so, but we could not consent to ignore one of those instruments by which the Holy Ghost has presented Him to our view. We want them all. Each fills his own place, and fulfils his own service, under the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost.

So also is it in the Epistles. Paul's line of things is as distinct from Peter's as Peter's is from John's, or as John's from James's. No two are alike, but all agree. There is no collision, because, like the four evangelists, each moves in his own appointed orbit, and all revolve round the one common centre. The orbit is distinct, but the centre is one.

Paul gives us the great truth of man's relation with God, on the ground of accomplished redemption, together with the counsels of God as to Israel and the Church.

Peter gives us the Christian pilgrimage, and God's government of the world.

James insists upon practical righteousness.

John opens up the grand theme of eternal life, first with the Father; afterwards manifested in the Son; then communicated unto us; and finally displayed in the glorious future.

Now, it would be the very height of folly on our part to institute any invidious comparison between those varied lines of truth, or the beloved and honoured instruments by whom those lines are presented to us. How silly it would be to

set up Matthew against Mark, Mark against Luke, Luke against John, or John against all the rest! How childish it would be for any one to say, "I go in for Paul's line of things only. James seems below the mark. Peter and John I do not appreciate. Paul is the man for me. His ministry suits me. The others do not reach my heart, or feed my soul as he does."

All this we should at once denounce as the most sinful folly. It would not be tolerated for a moment. The varied lines of truth all converge upon one glorious and blessed centre. The varied instruments are all employed by one and the self-same inspiring Spirit, for the one grand object of presenting the varied moral glories of Christ. We want them all. We could no more afford to do without Matthew or Mark than we could without Luke or John; and it is no part of our business to undervalue Peter or James, because they do not give such a lofty or comprehensive range of truth as Paul or John.

Each is needful in his place. Each has his position to fill, his work to do, his appointed line of things to attend to; and we should be doing serious damage to own souls, as well as marring the integrity of divine revelation, if we were to confine ourselves to any one particular line of truth, or attach ourselves exclusively to any one particular instrument or vessel.

The early Corinthians fell into this grave error, and thus called forth a sharp rebuke from the blessed apostle Paul. Some said they were of Paul; some of Apollos; some of Cephas; some of Christ. All were wrong; and those who said they were of Christ were quite as wrong as any of the others. They were carnal, and walked as men.



It was a grievous folly to be puffed up for one against another, inasmuch as they were all Christ's servants, and all belonged to the whole Church.

Nor is it otherwise now in the Church of God. There are varied kinds of workmen, and varied lines of truth; and it is our happy privilege, not to say our holy duty, to recognize and rejoice in them all. To be puffed up for one against another, is to be "carnal and walk as men." To depreciate any of Christ's servants is to depreciate the truth which he carries, and to forsake our own mercies. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 21-23.)

This is the true and the divine way to look at the matter; and this, too, is the way to avoid sects, parties, cliques and coteries in the Church of God. There is one body, one Head, one Spirit, one divine and perfect revelation, the Holy Scriptures. There are many members, many gifts, many lines of truth, many distinct characters of ministry. We want them all, and therefore God has given them all.

But, most surely, God has not given the various gifts and ministries for us to set one against another, but that we may humbly and thankfully avail ourselves of all, and profit by them according to His gracious purpose in giving them. If all were Pauls, where were the Peters? If all were Peters where were the Johns?

Nor this only; but what must be the effect of going in for any one particular line of truth, or character of ministry? What but to produce an

imperfect Christian character? We are all sadly prone to onesidedness, and nothing more ministers to this evil than an inordinate attachment to some one particular branch of truth, to the exclusion of other branches equally important. It is by "*the truth*" we are sanctified; by all, not by *some* truth. We should delight in every department of truth, and give a cordial welcome to each vessel or instrument which our God may be pleased to use in ministering His truth to our souls. To be puffed up for one against another is to be more occupied with the vessel than with the truth which the vessel contains, more occupied with man than with God; a fatal mistake! "Who then is Paul? or who is Apollos? but ministers by whom ye believed, even as *the Lord gave to every man.*" (1 Cor. iii. 4.)

Here lies the grand principle. God has various instruments for His work. We want them all, and we should value them all as His instruments, and nothing more. It has ever been Satan's object to lead the Lord's people to set up heads of schools, leaders of parties, centres of cliques, thus splitting up the Church of God into sects, and destroying its visible unity. Let us not be ignorant of his devices; but in every possible way "*endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.*" (2 Cor. ii. 11; Eph. iv. 3.)

How is this great object to be attained? By keeping near the centre; by abiding in Christ; by habitual occupation with Himself; by drinking deeply into His spirit, and walking in His footsteps; by sitting at His feet, in true brokenness of spirit and humility of mind; by thorough consecration to His service, to the furtherance of

His cause, to the promotion of His glory, to the prosperity and blessing of every beloved member of His body.

Thus shall we be delivered from strife and contention; from the discussion of profitless questions; from baseless theories; from partiality, prejudice and predilection. We shall be able to see and appreciate all the varied lines of truth converging upon the one divine centre, the varied rays of light emanating from the one eternal source. We shall rejoice in the great fact that in all the ways and works of God, in every department of nature and grace, in things on earth and things in heaven, in time and eternity, it is not a dull uniformity, but a delightful variety. In a word, God's universal and eternal principle is DIVERSITY AND UNITY.

## How Do You Worship?

READ JOHN XII. 1--11.

**S**HE came not to hear a sermon, although the first of Teachers was there; but to sit at His feet and hear His word (Luke x. 39) was not her purpose now, blessed as that was in its proper place.

She came not to make her requests known to Him. Time was, when, in deepest submission to His will, she had fallen at His feet, saying, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John xi. 32); but to pour out her supplications to Him as her only resource, was not now her thought, for her brother was seated at the table.

She came not to meet the saints, though pre-

cious saints were there, for it says, "Jesus loved Martha . . . and Lazarus." (John xi. 5.) Fellowship with them was blessed likewise, and, doubtless, of frequent occurrence; but fellowship was not her object now.

She came not after the weariness and toil of a week's battling with the world to be refreshed from Him; though surely she, like every saint, had learned the trials of the wilderness, and none more than she, probably, knew the blessed springs of refreshment that were in Him.

But she came, and that, too, at the moment when the world was expressing its deepest hatred of Him, to pour out what she long had treasured up (v. 7), that which was most valuable to her, all she had upon earth upon the person of the One whose love had made her heart captive, and absorbed her affections.

She thought not of Simon the leper; she passed the disciples by; her brother and her sister in the flesh and in the Lord engaged not her attention then; "Jesus only" filled her soul; her eye was on *Him*; her heart beat true to *Him*; her hands and feet were subservient to her eye and to her heart, and she "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair."

Adoration, homage, worship, blessing, was her one thought; and that in honour of the One who was "all in all" to her; and surely *such* worship was most refreshing to Him.

The unspiritual (v. 4) might murmur, but He upheld her cause, and showed how He could appreciate and value the grateful tribute of a heart that knew His worth and preciousness, and could not be silent as to it. A lasting record is preserved of what worship really is by the One

who accepted it, and of the one who rendered it.

And now, dear reader, is this your mode of worship, or do you on the Lord's day go to hear a sermon, say your prayers, meet the saints, or be refreshed after you six days' toil? Oh! if every eye were on the Lord alone; if every heart were true to Him; if we were each determined to see "no man, save Jesus only," what full praise there would be! Not with alabaster boxes now, but our bodies filled with the Holy Ghost, a stream of thanksgiving, of worship of the highest character, would ascend in honour of the blessed One that now adorns the glory as He once adorned the earth.

Be it ours thus to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Amen!

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### **Brief Remarks upon the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Revelation II. and III.**

*(Concluded from page 112.)*

**B**UT He cannot cast out any that have come to Him; and still in grace He lingers. The door is open for repentance. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." (v. 18.) The righteousness of God, and the practical righteousness of saints, are both unknown, notwithstanding their great pretensions. And what fills up the dark picture? While they think and speak as if they had the light of God, they are blind. Still His love lingers about the door. Alas! He is outside.

But while a sheep or a lamb is inside, the Shepherd waits outside. He will not go away, and leave it there. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." (*vv.* 20-21.)

What a fearful state things must have come to! Christ outside the door of His own House! But He perseveres, blessed be His name! though His head be filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. He knocks again; the slumbering one awakes; the knock is heard; the door is opened; the sheep know His voice; He gathers them out; they are caught up to His throne.

And now the corrupt mass of Christendom is spewed out of His mouth. The awful judgments of the earth immediately follow. The day of Jacob's trouble has come. But the Church, the Bride, is with her Lord.

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

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

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# 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).

## Reflections on the Book of Zechariah.

**Z**ECHARIAH was a companion with Haggai in that energy and gift of the Spirit which was animating the returned captives in the building of the temple. But under that inspiration Haggai applies himself more exclusively to that one object. All he says he addresses to the captives by way of encouragement in the work then immediately in their hand. Zechariah looks out more widely, anticipating distant days in the history of Israel and of the nations, with a purpose beyond that of merely encouraging the builders in their work.

This book opens with a kind of preface in which the prophet, before he details his visions, challenges the people, warning them not to treat the Lord's words by him as their fathers had treated

other words of the Lord by other prophets, which, nevertheless, had all been fulfilled against them, had "taken hold of them," as he speaks. (i. 1-6.)

He then begins to record his visions. Haggai had no visions. Zechariah is principally instructed by them. But they both prophesied in the same year, the second of the reign of Darius the Persian.

i. 7-17. This may be called "The vision of the horses among the myrtle trees." The first of these horses had a rider on it, the others were in the rear, and, as far as we learn, were without riders.\*

The prophet asks the angel that waited on him what this meant. The rider upon the foremost horse tells him that these unriden horses were the agents of the Lord's pleasure in the earth. The unriden horses, the representatives of the Gentiles, then speak and say that the whole earth was still and at rest; that is, just as they would have it. For such, surely, was the mind of the nations of the earth, whom God had set up upon the degradation and fall of Jerusalem. So would they have it; their exaltation upon the ruin of God's people.

The angel, who stood for Jerusalem, upon this at once takes the alarm, and pleads for the city of

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\* They are without riders in order, I believe, to represent the senseless, brutish force which marked the Gentiles, unguided as they were by the Spirit of God. The first horse was ridden by a man, a symbol of the divine energy that ruled the fortunes of Israel. It was "the angel of the Lord" that was the rider. Nebuchadnezzar had been already as an unriden horse (Dan. iv.). So now the remaining three Gentile powers (Psalm xlix. 20). So, in the next vision, the Gentiles are "horns," senseless things; Israel's friends are "carpenters."



the Lord and of Israel. The Lord having answered this appeal of the angel, the angel seems to let the prophet know the answer, telling him that the Lord was displeased with the Gentiles, who were thus at ease, though they had helped forward the affliction of Jerusalem; that Jerusalem should be restored, the Lord's house be built there again, and the cities of the land be re-occupied.

*vv.* 18-21. The second vision we may call "The vision of the four horns and the four carpenters." It gave the prophet a view of the Gentile adversaries that had dispersed Judah, and also of the friends who were soon to avenge Judah at the hand of his Gentile adversaries.

ii. This third vision may be called "The vision of the man with the measuring line." The prophet here has before him, not only the angel who was attending him, but another angel, and a man with a measuring line in his hand; and moreover, he hears the voice of the Lord; or, it may be the Word of the Lord is rehearsed to him. But the whole of this teaches him that Jerusalem is to be in its place, established and dignified again; and that after the glory has seated itself there, inquisition should be made of those nations who, in the day of their calamity, troubled the Israel of God.\* Zion, in that day, is to sing for joy; nations also shall join themselves to the Lord of Israel, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God, and be subdued to the sense of the presence of the Lord in the earth again.

iii. The fourth vision is that of "Joshua,

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\* We see this again, I may say, in Matthew xxv., when the Son of man is on the throne of His millennial glory.

the high priest." Having just received a pledge of the restoration of that city, we have now, in another vision, a picture of the justification of the people, and this justification leads, in the end, to the beauty and acceptance of Israel in the days of the kingdom, when Messiah, "the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel," shall be exalted in providential authority over the whole earth. (Gen. xlix. 24.) But this picture is so vivid, so graphic, that it can be used as the delineation of the story of the justification of any sinner, in the great principles of it; as we know that justification itself is one and the same for each and all of us. It is the sinner, the polluted one, the Joshua in filthy garments, chosen, cleansed, stripped and clothed again, all in grace, in a grace that acts as from itself on the warrant of the blood of Christ, while we, like Joshua, are silent before it.

iv. The fifth vision is that of "The golden candlestick." If, in the preceding vision, we saw the great act of justification exhibited, the value of Christ applied to the unclean condition of Israel, here we find exhibited the communication of power, and the application of the Spirit to the circumstances of Israel. It therefore follows in due order. And the power is pledged not to be withdrawn till the needed grace be accomplished, and the work begun be completed; till what was entered on in that day of restoration, under Zerubbabel, be perfected in the day of the royal Messiah, the true Zerubbabel, the revived Heir and Holder of the honour and strength of the house of David, the Head of all order throughout the earth, as in kingdom-days.

v. 1-4. The sixth vision is that of "The fly-

ing roll." This is an exhibition of curse or judgment finding out sinners, whether sinners against their neighbours as *thieves*, or sinners against God as *false swearers*.\* The previous visions had been of mercy to Israel, either under the providence of God, or under Messiah, or under the Spirit; but now we get visions of judgment.

v. 5-11. The seventh vision is that of "The ephah with the woman sitting in it." This is a picture of wickedness, or lawlessness. It is hidden, the woman in the ephah, and it is borne to the land of Shinar, its base, where it began its course. This we know; for Nimrod was the first great representative of the Wicked or the Lawless One, who is to be destroyed in the day of the Lord. (2 Thes. ii. 8.) This "wickedness" is hidden, as here, in an "ephah," or, as in Matt. xiii., in "three measures of meal"; hidden, I may say, under a profession, as of the religion of Israel, or of the name of Christendom. But it is really Babylon at the end, as at the beginning, "the land of Shinar," as we again see in Rev. xvii., and many other scriptures.

vi. 1-8. The eighth vision is that of "The four chariots." These symbolize the four great monarchies so much spoken of by the prophet Daniel. These chariots, drawn by different horses, come forth from between mountains of brass, and then take their appointed course over different parts of the earth; and this may remind us of the first vision, or that of "The horses

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\* Curse follows law (Gal. ii. 10). As the law had its two tables, the curse has its two sides, corresponding, as we here see, to the two tables.

among the myrtle trees." Only we have a new fact here, namely, that the second chariot has settled God's question with the first; or, in the language of this vision, "Those that go forth to the north country have quieted my spirit," saith the Lord, "in the north country." The Persian had, in the days of Zechariah, put down the Chaldean.

vi. 9-15. These closing verses of the same chapter seem to be a kind of appendix to this vision of the four chariots.\* The prophet is instructed to take certain children of the returned captives, and in their presence to set crowns on the head of Joshua, the high priest, and then to address Joshua as a type of the Branch, the destined builder of the Lord's temple, the bearer of the glory, the combined Priest and King who is to secure peace in the coming days of His kingdom. And having gone through this ceremony, the prophet was ordered to lay up these crowns under the hand of certain guardians, in the house of the Lord, as a memorial of all this destined glory and power which are to be displayed in the last days, in the person of the Branch; that is, the Messiah of Israel, the Christ of God.

But now we may observe that, on closing the sixth chapter, we have done with Zechariah's visions. We are also in another year, the fourth instead of the second of Darius. But I would separate these remaining chapters into what appears to me to be their distinct portions, as I have done with the preceding.

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\* For it intimates a fifth kingdom which in season is to be revealed, the four kingdoms of the Gentiles having preceded it.

vii., viii. These chapters must be read together, I judge. For chapter viii. 19 clearly seems to refer to chapter vii. 3. They form the communication which was made by the Lord to the prophet, when the returned captives sent to inquire whether their captivity-fasts were now to be continued. The prophet begins his answer by a humbling word addressed to the conscience. They had, it is true, been fasting statedly during the years of their captivity; but he now tells them to ask themselves, Had this been done to the Lord?

The character of the answer which the prophet, under the Holy Ghost, returns to the inquiring people is greatly worthy of thought; but it would be too much to consider it in detail. I would, however, say this upon it: that this word of Zechariah reminds me of the method of the Lord Jesus in a like case. He never simply answered an inquiry, but so took it up as to call the conscience and heart of the inquirer into exercise. He looked rather to the moral state of the inquirer than to the subject of inquiry. So Zechariah here. He humbles, exhorts, and teaches, before he gives the answer. But then, when he does come to give the answer, he gives it fully and blessedly indeed. He tells them that their fasts shall become feasts; and further, announces prophetically the bright and palmy days which yet in the distance awaited Israel.

ix., x. These chapters, taken and read together, form another burden of the prophet.

Syria, the Philistines, Tyre and Sidon, are to be humbled, though a remnant may be spared, in the day when Israel is protected and vindicated by God her Saviour, and the eyes of men

are towards the Lord. This is first announced here. And then the appearing, the royal glory of Messiah, is anticipated, offered, as we know it was, in the day of Matthew xxi., but being then refused, it remains for a coming day when it will assert its place, and make good its claims by *judgment*, as the prophet here goes on to tell us.\* But then, after that, the kingdom shall be displayed in its universality of strength or peace. The prophet then addresses Messiah, and pledges to Him that, by His own blood, which was the seal of the covenant, His people, His prisoners in Israel, should be delivered. And he then suitably addresses another word to Israel, presenting Messiah to them as the object of their confidence, and the security to them of victory and honour.

The results of the recovery of Israel are then enlarged upon, in great and various blessedness, in chapter x.

xi. This chapter may be read by itself. It gives us, as I believe, an anticipation of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, as in the Gospel by Matthew; introduced, however, by some solemn premonitions of judgment, as we see in verses 1-3.

Messiah begins to cite His commission under the God of Israel, telling us that He had come forth to find the sheep of Israel, for that they were in an evil case, from their *possessors*, their

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\* The rejection of the King at His first coming has made *judgment* necessary to the future and final display of His glory in Israel. Many other prophecies, besides this of Zechariah, tells us this, as also the Lord's great prophetic word in Matthew xxiv.

*vendors*, and their *shepherds*; that is, from such as the Romans, the Herods, and the Pharisees.

He then tells us that He took two staffs, in order to fulfil this His commission. And these staffs were significant or symbolic. Moses, in other days, had his rod; Messiah now had His staffs. They signified strength and beauty; for Christ had to impart each of these to Israel, to establish and adorn them, to secure and dignify them. The inhabitants of the land, the great body of the Jewish people, are found to disappoint His service as much as any, so that He has still to separate "the poor of the flock" from the general "flock of slaughter."

His first service is then told us. After thus taking up the flock of Israel (as He does in the earlier chapters of Matthew), He cuts off three of the shepherds whom He found in the land. This we see in Matt. xxii.: the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees, religious heads of the people, being then silenced in controversy with the Lord Jesus.

Having done this, Messiah disclaims them, breaking His staff, "Beauty," as we see Him doing in Matt. xxiii.; withdrawing Himself, which was the taking away of their beauty from them: for they lose their glory when they lose Him. They were but a crownless head without Him; and that being so, *all* is gone for the present.

He then tells us that "the poor of the flock" waited on Him as "the Word of the Lord," and this we see, in perfect order and place, in Matt. xxiv., xxv.

And then He anticipates the scene of His betrayal and death, as in Matt. xxvi., xxvii. And this is followed here by the prophet, as we

know it has been historically, by the disruption of Israel. The other staff, "Bands," is broken.\*

A remarkable anticipation of Christ's ministry all this is. But this being the history of the true Shepherd, the good Shepherd, at the hand of the flock, we then get the history of the flock at the hand of the foolish shepherd, the idol-shepherd. This is retribution, as many other scriptures let us know, that the raising up of Antichrist will be in judgment upon Israel for their rejection of God's Christ, their own Messiah. This all refers to future happenings (vv. 15-17).†

xii.-xiv. These chapters form the last burden of our prophet. It tells us of "the day of the Lord," or of that great action which is to introduce the kingdom. It begins very significantly, celebrating God in three characters of glory: the Stretcher out of the heavens, the Layer of the foundations of the earth, the Former of the spirit of man. (xii. 1.) For these three characters are such as the kingdom is destined to display.

\* The Godhead, the Jehovah-ship, as I may speak, of Jesus, is fully set out in verse 13. It was *Jehovah* who was priced at thirty pieces of silver.

† The foolish shepherd, thus raised up in judgment or retribution on Israel, because of their rejection of Messiah, may remind us of Saul. He treated the flock very much as this foolish shepherd is to treat them (1 Sam. viii.); and he was given to the people because they had rejected the Lord in the person of His servant Samuel. We may read Ezek. xxxiv. in this connection also. But I must add that, though the good and true Shepherd was at first refused, and in retribution the foolish shepherd is to be raised up, still, at the end, on the mountains of Israel, and beside the rivers of Israel, the flock shall again lie down and feed under the care of their Shepherd-King, the true David, who will guide them by the skilfulness of His hand, and feed them according to the integrity of His heart. All Scripture tells this.



For then the God of grace and of glory will be seen as having furnished the heavens, as having established the earth, and as having renewed man. And the details of the prophetic burden that follow this introduction give witness to these things. It is, as I said above, "the day of the Lord" which is delineated here, in various virtues and features of it.

The confederated enemies of Jerusalem shall be broken under the walls of Jerusalem in that day; and this shall be done after a manner and method which is to have respect to certain moral results. But if the *hand* of God work amid the circumstances of that day, the *Spirit* of God shall work with the people of that day also.

This is blessedly delineated here. The Spirit will begin His work with them in the power of conviction. They are brought to remember their sin against Jesus, and to mourn bitterly. Then they are led to discover by faith, the remedy for sin in that very Jesus whom once with wicked hands they crucified and slew. Then they consider their way, and with Levite zeal, purify themselves. According to Deut. xiii., nothing is spared, though dear as near kindred. Then they hold communion with Jesus about those very wounds which once they themselves inflicted.\*

The hand of the Lord shall then work in company with His Spirit, the fire of persecution or of discipline (the purging of the floor, as John the Baptist speaks,) taking its course, and then

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\* This communion may be introduced (after the zeal of verse 4) by the Lord Jesus Himself breaking in, in spirit, and saying, "I am no prophet, but an husbandman, for man has acquired me as a slave from my youth," for such is said to be the translation of verse 5.

Judah shall be acknowledged again by the Lord, and again the Lord shall be acknowledged by Judah, according to the pattern or precedent of Deut. xxvi. 17-19.

This leads us to the close of chapter xiii. At the opening of the next chapter, the 14th and the last, we have the great action around the city, which had been anticipated at the beginning of chapter xii., further and more fully described, together with the interference of the Lord Himself in the behalf of the city, and the results of its deliverance, such as the consecration of it as the centre of God's earthly purposes, and the seat of His earthly glory; and then the millennial or kingdom-joy of the nations holding their feast-days there as the scene of public, universal festivation.

Solemnly, in the midst of all this, we are given to see the judgment of those who had been fighting against Jerusalem, and also of those who would not go up there to worship in the days of the glory. What ought to have been, but was not, shall then be realized. *Holiness* shall give character to everything; consecration to God. Nor shall there be blot or exception then, as hitherto there has been. The Canaanite was in the land, and left there, after Abraham had entered it; but now, "there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts" (Gen. xii. 6; Zech. xiv. 21).

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## **“ Rivers of Living Water.”**

“ **I**N the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John vii. 37, 38.)

The feast referred to in this lovely scripture was “the feast of tabernacles,” called, at the opening of the chapter, “*The Jews’ feast.*” This stamped its character. It could no longer be called, as in Leviticus xxiii., “A feast of Jehovah.” The Lord could not own it. It had become an empty formality, a powerless ordinance, a piece of barren routine, something in which man could boast himself, while God was entirely shut out.

This is nothing uncommon. There has ever been a strong tendency in the human mind to perpetuate forms when the power is gone. No doubt power may clothe itself in a certain form; and, so long as the form is the expression of the power, it is all right and good. But the danger lies in going on with the mere outward form without a single particle of inward power. Thus it was with Israel of old; and thus it is with the professing Church now. We have all to watch against this snare of the devil. He will use a positive ordinance of God as a means of deceiving the soul, and shutting out God altogether. But where faith is in lively exercise the soul has to do with God in the ordinance, whatever it is, and thus the power and freshness are duly maintained.

The reader has, no doubt, noticed that in the opening chapters of John’s Gospel the inspired writer invariably designates the feasts as *feasts of the Jews*; and not only so, but we find the Lord

Jesus displacing one after another of these feasts, and offering Himself as an object for the heart. Thus at the opening of chapter vii. we read, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand."

Terrible anomaly! deadly delusion! Seeking to murder the Son of God, and yet keeping the feast of tabernacles! Such is religious man without God. "His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also *may see Thy works* that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, *shew Thyself to the world*. For neither did His brethren believe on Him."

Near as His brethren were to Him, according to the flesh, they knew Him not, they believed not on Him. They had not one thought in common with Him. They would fain have Him make a display of Himself before the world. They knew not His object. He had not come from heaven in order to be gazed at and wondered after. "All the world will wonder after the beast" by-and-by (Rev. xiii. 3); but the blessed Son of God came to serve and to give. He came to hide Himself, to glorify God, and to serve man.

He refused, therefore, to exhibit Himself at the feast. "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come; but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet to this feast: for My time is not yet full come. When He had said these words unto them He abode

still in Galilee. But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.”

And for what did He go up? He went up to serve. He went up to glorify His Father, and to be the willing Servant of man's necessity. “Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, saying, *My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me.*”

Here His moral glory, as the self-hiding Servant, shines out. “My doctrine is not mine.” Such was His answer to those who wondered where He got His learning. Alas! they knew Him not. His motives and His objects lay far beyond the reach of carnal and worldly minded men. They measured Him by their own standard, and hence all their conclusions were utterly false. “If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.”

The blessed One did not speak from Himself, as if He were independent of the Father, but as One who lived in absolute and complete dependence, and in unbroken communion, drawing all His springs from the living God; doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing, apart from the Father.

We have the same truth with reference to the Holy Ghost, in John xvi. “Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but

whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come." The Holy Ghost did not speak from Himself, as independent of the Father and the Son, but as One in full communion with them.

But we must turn, for a moment, to the words which form the special subject of this paper. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

Here we have set before us a truth of infinite preciousness and immense practical power. The Person of Christ is the divine spring of all freshness and spiritual energy. It is in Him alone the soul can find all it really needs. It is to Him we must betake ourselves for all our personal refreshment and blessing. If, at any time, we find ourselves dull, heavy, and barren, what are we to do? Make efforts to raise the tone? Nay, this will never do. What then? "Let him *come unto Me, and drink.*"

Mark the words. It is not, "Come unto Me, and *draw.*" We may draw for others, and be dry ourselves; but if we drink our own souls are refreshed, and then "rivers of living water" will flow out.

Nothing is more miserable than the restless efforts of a soul out of communion with God. We may be very busy; our *hands* may be full of work; our *feet* may run hither and thither; the *head* may be full of knowledge; but if the *heart* be not livingly occupied with the Person of Christ, it will, it must, be all barrenness and desolation so far as we are personally concerned; and there will, there can, be no "rivers of living water" flowing out for others.

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# 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).

## Reflections on the Book of Malachi.

**M**ALACHI closes the writings of the minor prophets, as they are called, and with them the volume of the Old Testament. This suggests and warrants a short review of things in the previous story of Israel.

From the beginning the Lord had been in various ways testing and proving that people, whom He had made His own people. After having delivered them from Egypt, and borne them through the wilderness, under Joshua, He set them in the land promised to their fathers; and then, in a certain sense, began afresh with them.

This is seen in the days of the Judges who succeeded Joshua. But what was the story? The people transgressed; the Lord chastened; the

people wept under the rod; the Lord raised up a deliverer. Thus it was again and again.

But during all this time the Lord kept Israel before and under Himself. In those days there was no captivity of the people, or conquest of the land. Israel was still at home. The land was still their own, and Jehovah their King as well as their God.

In due season, the Lord gave them the house and the throne of David. They flourished into a kingdom. But the kingdom became untrue to Him as the nation had been. Much long-suffering towards the house of David the Lord exercised, as before He had exercised towards the nation. The Books of Judges and of 2 Chronicles show us all this. But at length, loss of home and country, with sore captivity, ensued; and a worse condition than had been known under the rod of the Philistines, Midianites or Canaanites, was now known under the kings of Assyria and Babylon. Scattering of the people among the Gentiles, and possession of their land by the Gentiles now takes place.

This was fearful. There is, however, restoration. There is a return of captives from Babylon. Jerusalem is regained, rebuilt, repeopled. The house of God is raised up again, and the worship of His Name and the service of His altar are observed again. But this state of things was something quite new. Israel was not now a nation set in their own land, as they had been under Joshua and the Judges; nor a kingdom with one of their own children on the throne (such a throne as the glory could accompany), as under David and David's sons. The people were now the vassals of the Gentile. They were debtors to



the Gentile for permission to occupy the land of their fathers, and to observe the laws and do the service of their God. They were the subjects of the Persian, and their ruler was his viceregent.

This, surely, was a new condition. But they are put into it, that they may be again tested, tested to the full, and thereby proved and convicted to the uttermost. For so it comes to pass : when the trial of them is made in their new circumstances, failure ensues, as it had ever done. The Book of Judges had already witnessed against them as a *nation*; 2 Chronicles had already witnessed against them as a *kingdom*; and now Ezra, and Nehemiah, and this prophecy of Malachi witness against them as *returned captives*.

I must, however, turn aside from this for a moment.

The returned captives, at their beginning, give some beautiful samples of faith and service. They are left, as we may see presently, by Malachi, in a very sad moral condition. But there had been brighter earlier moments. Great events, greater than had been known for centuries in Israel, had been witnessed : such as their journey from Babylon, the building of the temple, the building of the wall, the purifying of the congregation again and again.

Yet there was no miracle : all was accomplished by force of moral energy; the Spirit of God working in the people rather than the hand of God working for them. There was no cloudy pillar to conduct them across the second desert; but they went, the fast and the prayer on the banks of the Ahava bespeaking the virtue of the Spirit that was among them. They refused Samaritan alliances, as a people that knew their Nazarite-

ship. The customs of the nations, the traditions of the elders, their own thoughts and wisdom, had no place in forming their character or conduct. The Word of God was their law. Individual grace and gift shine eminent, as in Ezra and Nehemiah. The light that was in Ezra, the single-heartedness that mark Nehemiah, could carry the people through difficulties, when the rod of Moses was no longer in the camp to do its marvels, as in the sight of the enemy.

I speak not of Mordecai and Esther, though strange and admirable was their way, without a miracle in their behalf, because they represent *Israel in the dispersion, and not as returned captives.\**

But these brighter moments had now faded, and Malachi gives us our last Old Testament sight of the state of Israel, sad and humbling as indeed it is.

In due season, the hour of the New Testament arrives, and we find the same before us, just as Malachi had promised us it should be. Messiah, the Lord of the temple, appears, introduced by John the Baptist, the messenger of Malachi iii. 1, and Elijah (if the people would receive him) of Malachi iv. 5. The series of tests which have been made from the day of the Exodus to the day of the returned captives is resumed now.

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\* The virtues which would have duly given character to the remnant of Israel, or the returned captives, showed themselves to perfection in the Lord Jesus, who was, as we may say, the Remnant in His day. He would have His disciples refuse Samaritan alliance, and yet bow to the Gentile. "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's," may be read as the summary of the religion of the returned captives.

Messiah is offered,\* and He proposes Himself, in full and varied forms, to the acceptance of Israel. And, at last, the Spirit is given, and apostles full of the Holy Ghost call on Israel to repent and believe, and thus enter into the times of refreshing and restitution promised and spoken of by all the prophets.

These are the brightest, richest visitations: the last, yet the best; the closing, yet the most promising; but, like all the rest, they fail. Israel is not gathered. In Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land; as a pilgrim-people, or as captives; as a nation, or as a kingdom; as presented with Messiah and His works, or as visited by the Spirit and His virtues; still, from first to last, under all the patient exercise of this long-suffering, grace, and wisdom, they are untrue still. They "always resist the Holy Ghost," as one inspired voice says of them: "they fill up the measure of their sins always," as another inspired voice pronounces against them.

The nation had been preserved, as we saw, and kept in their own land till the king, the house of David, was set up; and now they are restored to their own land, and kept there till Messiah appear and offer Himself to them. "The rod of the tribe of Judah is preserved, in order that the Branch of the root of Jesse may be presented."

At the opening of the Gospels we find passages from Malachi quoted, as belonging to that moment of the evangelists. The close of the Old thus links itself with the opening of the New

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\* "If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come," are words which clearly tell us that the ministry of the Baptist to Christ was a *testing* time.

Testament. And these connections, simple, and striking, and self-widening as they are, illustrate the unity of the Divine Volume. They display something of the moral glory of the Book, and let us learn, what we learn from another and a more direct witness (that is, from a passage in the Book itself) that "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts xv. 18).

We may briefly present this prophecy in the following manner :

i. This chapter opens with a terrible exposure of the moral condition of the returned captives. Was the state of Israel ever worse? If idolatry had marked it from the beginning hitherto, infidelity does now; the spirit of scorning, the spirit that contemns and repudiates all the claims of God, and only mocks His pleadings and entreaties. So that, we may say, if the unclean spirit have at this time of Malachi gone out, a more wicked one has entered. We cannot say that the old unclean spirit has returned, bringing with him seven other spirits; for we do not find, under the word of this prophet, a return to idolatry. But we may say that a spirit more wicked than the old one has entered.

The "wherein" of this chapter, used by the returned captives again and again, as they answer the appeals and rebukes of the Lord, sounds awfully in our ears.

ii. The Lord, by the prophet, in this chapter, addresses a word of rebuke to the priests now, as He had done to the people before. The Spirit awakens a word in the bosom of the prophet, challenging the abominations that were committed in Judah and Jerusalem, the treachery

against the nation's covenant; letting the people know that they were not straitened in the Lord, who had provisions for them in the Spirit to fulfil His part in that covenant, but that they had been their own enemies, unfaithful to their conditions in the same covenant. The covenant is spoken of under the figure of a marriage-contract, or marriage vows, according to the style of the prophets generally. And it is such a figure as the Lord's own words about Himself and His people Israel would warrant and suggest.

iii., iv. The Lord, continuing His controversy with the evil estate of Israel, here lets them know that of a truth the Lord of the temple would come, and His messenger before Him; but that such a mission would turn out to be a very different thing from what they expected. They thought, to be sure, that it would be in their favour, that it would flatter and accredit them, set them up, and be deliverance and glory to them. They sought it: delighted themselves in the prospect of it (v. 2). But the prophet would have them undeceive themselves, and learn that in *judgment* this mission would be; necessarily so, because of their evil condition. And the present question with them should therefore be, Who will abide this coming of the Lord? not, as it were, Who will tell its glories and its blessings? as they might have thought, but, Who will abide the searching process that will attend it?

Still there was patience in God, though thus insulted. Had not this been so, had He not been God and not man, Israel would have been already consumed. But even now they might prove that He would bless them beyond all expected measures, if they would but be obedient.

In the midst of all this national iniquity, the remnant are manifested. The Lord declares that He has them and their ways in His *remembrance* now, and will have them as His *displayed jewels* by and by, in that day when there shall be to some a Sun with healing in his rays, to others a Sun to burn up as an oven; like the two in the bed, at the mill, or in the field, of which the Lord Himself speaks in the Gospels.

The prophet then closes by addressing this remnant with advices and promises; and as the Old Testament thus closes, so does the New open; for, at the very beginning of Luke's Gospel, we see this remnant, in the persons of Zacharias and Elizabeth, following this advice of Malachi, obedient to the law of Moses, with its statutes and judgments; and we see them also receiving the Elijah in the person of their child John, according to the promise of Malachi.\*

I would add a little by way of postscript.

The John Baptist of the Gospels is identified (officially, not personally,) with the Elijah of Malachi (Matt. xi.; Mark i.; Luke i., vii.). John Baptist stood ready to fulfil the promise of the prophet to Israel. He was as the messenger that went before the face of the Lord of the temple; and as the one who would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the

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\* The remnant, let me add, are not promised present deliverance from the Gentile power, but they are taught to hold by the Word, to expect the judgment of the wicked, and a new state of things in due time. Our epistles, in like manner, do not promise us a recovery of church beauty, but teach us to look for a new and better thing; and the coming of the Lord will find us as the epistles leave us, that is to say, just as the first coming of the Lord found Malachi's remnant as Malachi had left them.

children to the fathers. But Israel was unbelieving, and, as the ancient oracle is a standing oracle in the story of that people, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Isa. vii. 9), Israel remained unblest.

Elijah, in Ahab's day, was a restorer, as we see in 1 Kings xviii. But this was but for a season. His light was rejoiced in by the people; but Jezebel forced him out into the wilderness again.

So with the Baptist. His light was rejoiced in also. But, again, this was only for a season. The multitude were baptized of him; but the wicked hated him; and there was another Jezebel in that day that had him beheaded; and Israel was left unestablished, whether by Elijah or the Baptist.

But the promised Elijah will still appear, and lead on to the throne and power of Messiah. For God is true, though every man be a liar. His gifts and calling are without repentance. He will be faithful to Israel, though, as we have seen, Israel under every trial has been unfaithful to Him. He will accomplish His purposes in grace, be the world, be Israel, or man, never so angry or never so perverted. "God is unchangeable, both in righteousness and grace."

"All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. xi. 26).

"Behold the mountain of the Lord

In latter days shall rise,  
On mountain-tops above the hills,  
And draw the wond'ring eyes."

## **Rejoicing in God and Waiting for Christ.**

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”  
(2 Thessalonians iii. 5.)

**T**HERE are two things that constitute the joy of a Christian while on his earthly journey, presenting an object constantly before his heart. The first is the hope of the coming of the Lord; and the second is present communion and fellowship with God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. These two things cannot be separated without loss to our souls; for we cannot have real profit without both of them. If we are not looking for the coming of the Lord, there is nothing whatever that can separate us from this present evil world; if such be the case, Christ Himself will not be the object before the soul; nor shall we be able, in the same measure as when looking for Him, to apprehend the mind and counsels of God about the world.

Again, if this hope be looked at apart from present communion and fellowship with God, we shall not have present power, but on the contrary we shall be enfeebled through the mind being too much occupied and overborne by the evil around. We cannot be really looking for God's Son from heaven without at the same time seeing that the world has utterly rejected Him and that the world is going wrong; its wise men having no wisdom; the principles of evil loosening all bonds; and all going on to judgment. Seeing this, the soul becomes oppressed and the heart sad; but if through grace the Christian is in present communion and fellowship with God, his soul is steady



and calm and happy before God, because there is a fund of blessing in Him which no circumstances can ever touch or change. The evil tidings are heard and the sorrow is seen, but his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, which carries him far above every circumstance. We all want this. To walk steadily with God we need both this fellowship and this hope.

I do not believe that a Christian can have his heart scripturally right unless he is looking for God's Son from heaven. There could be no such things as attempting to set the world right if its sin in rejecting Christ were fully seen; and moreover a correct judgment of the character of the world will never be formed until that crowning sin is apprehended by the soul. To a Christian who is looking for Christ and waiting for Him to come from heaven, Christ Himself is unspeakably more the object before the soul. *It is not only that I shall get to heaven and be happy, but that the Lord Himself is coming from heaven for me and for all the Church. It is this that gives its character to the joy of the saint.* As Christ Himself says: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." When He finds His delight, then will you also find yours. He with you and you with Him: because it will then be, "For ever with the Lord."

You may think to find good, or to produce good, in man; but you will never find in man any thought of waiting for Christ. In the world the first Adam may be cultivated and civilised, but it remains the first Adam still. The last Adam, having been rejected by the world, will never be found there, and it is the looking for Him, the

rejected Lord, that stamps its character on the walk of the saints.

Then again, there is another thing connected with my waiting for God's Son from heaven. I am not yet with the One I love, and while waiting for Him I am going through the world, tired and worn with the spirit and character of everything around me. The more I am in communion with God, the more keenly shall I feel the spirit of the world to be a weariness to me, although God still upholds my soul in fellowship and communion with Himself. Therefore the Apostle says in 2 Thessalonians i. 6, 7: "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense . . . to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." So then I get rest to my spirit now in waiting for Christ, knowing that when He comes He will have everything His own way. For the coming of the Lord, which will be trouble to the world, will be to the saints full and everlasting rest. Still, we are not to be "weary and faint in our minds." It is not a right thing to be weary of the service and conflict. Oh, no! rather let us be victorious every day, remembering that tribulation and conflict come before the rest.

However, when walking with God, there is not so much thinking of combat as finding joy in God Himself. This I shall know all the better when I am in the glory; my soul will then be enlarged and more capable of enjoying what God really is, but the kind of joy I have now is the same as I shall have when the Lord Jesus comes to be glorified in His saints; only it will be greater in degree. And if this joy in God is now in my soul in power, it hides the world from me alto-

gether and becomes a spring of love to those in the world. For though I may be tired of the combat, still I feel there are people in the world who need the love I enjoy, and I desire that they should possess it, because it is the joy of what God is for me. This it is that sustains me and carries me through all the conflict. So that our souls should be exercised both about the fellowship and about the hope; for if I look for Christ's coming apart from fellowship and communion with God, I shall be oppressed and shall not go on. When the love of God fills my heart, it flows out towards all who have need of it, towards saints and sinners according to their need. For if I feel the power of this love in my heart, I shall be going out to serve others, because it is the power of this love that enables me to go through the toil and labour of service and to suffer for Christ's sake. If my soul is wrapped up in the last Adam, attachment to Christ puts the right stamp upon all that is of the first Adam.

When this love has led out into active service, then the conflict doubtless will be found, as in 2 Corinthians, ch. 1., where it is accompanied by present blessing in the midst of trials; but in 2 Thessalonians, ch. i., it is the presence of tribulations and no rest out of them until the Lord comes. It says: "That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." In 2 Corinthians i., 3, 4, there is present blessing in the midst of the trial, because there it is "the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation"; so that if the sufferings for Christ's sake be ours, there are at the same time the consolations of God in the soul. How rich a spring of blessing is this in return for this poor

little trouble of mind! I get God pouring into my soul the revelation of Himself; I get God communicating Himself to my soul; for it is really that. I find it to be a present thing; it comes home to me, to my heart; the very joy of God; God delighting in me and I in God.

He identifies Himself with those who suffer for Him. There is no time like the time of trial for God's coming into a soul, for in no way does He so fully reveal Himself to the soul as when He is exercising it in trial. There is astonishing strength in this; for it is Christ Himself coming in and making Himself known in present living power, even while these poor mortal bodies are unchanged. Our bodies are not yet redeemed with power, though they are bought with a price; but have in Christ the life and the power; and in spite of all that is contrary to us, God is pouring in these consolations when we are in tribulation, showing the kind of power in Christ by which we are lifted up above every circumstance of trial. "May the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

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## **The Believer in Relation to the Gospel.**

"**I**T is an unhealthy symptom," says one, "when the simple gospel is not relished. It shows that the mind is at work, rather than the conscience exercised before God, or the affections engaged with Christ. The Spirit, who leads into all truth, connects everything in His teaching

## THE BELIEVER IN RELATION TO THE GOSPEL. 175

with those great primary truths, the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ."

There are not a few, alas! in our own day who are affected with this *unhealthy symptom*. "It is only *the gospel*," say some, especially those who assume a high tone of spirituality, and who speak slightly of earnest gospel workers. But whatever may be our individual thoughts of the gospel, we are bound to think of it according to the word of the Lord, and for the sake of the unsaved.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36.) Here the blessed Master assures all His servants that one human soul is of more value than the whole material world. And can it be a light thing in His sight for any of His servants to be indifferent to the means of the eternal well-being of that which is so precious to Him? Did He not commend in the highest way the zeal of the "four" men who, in spite of every difficulty, brought the palsied man, and laid him at His feet? "When He saw *their* faith" (not *his*) "He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven." (Mark ii.)

We want such zeal now, in connection with all our preaching rooms, earnest hearts that would bring in faith poor palsied souls to the place where the Spirit of God is working. Such zeal is sure to meet its bright reward. In no other way can a preacher be so helped and encouraged. He who honoured the faith of the "four" *then* is unchanged, and honours such faith, *now*.

A great responsibility thus rests with all who know the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation to the lost. To hold back this truth, or in any way to hinder its full and free proclamation, is to rob

the sinner of his only hope of heaven, and Christ of His special glory as the Saviour. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Rom. i. 16.) What dignity and glory this gives to the gospel! It is nothing less than the power of God, "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe; according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." Such are the marvellous results of the blessed mission of the gospel of the grace of God that it raises all who receive it from the depths of their guilt and misery, and sets them in the presence of God, pardoned, and accepted in the Beloved. (Eph. i. 6; 19, 20; ii. 1-10.)

This is the gospel which the Lord has committed to His servants. May He in mercy grant that both reader and writer may be found faithful to this sacred trust.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH

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

The All-Sufficiency of Christ.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews calls us to leave all for Christ.

Whatever be the objects in which thus far we may have gloried, it is necessary to abandon them now, and to receive in their stead Jesus the Son of God.

Angels give place to the Son: Moses, the servant of the house, gives place to Christ, who is the Builder; Joshua, the ancient captain, that led Israel into Canaan, gives place to Christ the Captain of salvation who is now conducting the children to glory; Aaron, the carnal and dying priest, gives place to the true Melchisedec, who lives and serves in the heavenly temple for ever; the old covenant gives place to the new which Jesus administers; and at the same time the old

carnal or earthly ordinances give place to the spiritual and efficacious ministrations of the heavenly Priest; finally, the blood of the victims gives place to the blood of Christ, offered through the eternal Spirit.

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

But this was a doctrine hard to bear, particularly for a people such as the Jews, who had in so many ways put their confidence in the law and legal righteousness. Amongst us also, at the present day, when, amidst so many religious forms, men propose with authority other foundations of confidence than Jesus, and other men blindly receive them, we have to consider carefully what are the bases of this doctrine.

In these days, when all creation groans, the soul thirsts after this simple gospel which preaches to us the perfect satisfaction of Jesus; and it is the design of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews to unfold to the eager soul the reasons for which it can thus embrace Jesus as all that forms the object of its confidence and glory. This epistle declares what authorizes it thus to appreciate Jesus; to estimate Him as having no equal; in a word, to judge that He is the one and only stay of the poor sinner.

But how does the Holy Spirit assure us of this truth by this epistle? How does He show us that it is our own salvation to leave every other prop in order to have none but Christ alone for our stay? He shows it to us in the only way in which

it could be done, namely, by presenting to our soul the appreciation which God makes of Christ.

That which warrants the value I am to attach to Christ is that God has already before this made known to us the worth which He possesses. If my soul confides exclusively in Him, I cannot be grounded in so doing but by seeing the foundation of Israel's confidence at the time of the blood-sprinkling in Egypt. (Exodus xii.)

God had prescribed this blood : such is my divine and sure warrant; and the Epistle to the Hebrews assures it to me. It speaks to me of the high value God sees in Christ; it tells me how clearly, simply, and exclusively He has laid upon Christ all that can relieve the soul.

Such is the reason why this admirable epistle lingers with so much complacency upon Christ in all His present relations with us, in all the ministrations that He accomplishes for us. There is what explains the numerous quotations in chapter i., which establish Jesus far above angels; there is what explains the glorious commentary which chapter ii. gives on the dignity of the Son of man; the declarations of His great superiority over Moses (iii.); the abundant and varied testimonies borne to His priesthood (iv.), supplying in quite another way that wherewith Aaron had been honoured, or what the Law conferred (vii.). There is the reason why He is represented as anointed and consecrated by an oath, and seated in the heavens in the midst of the sanctuary, as well as at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens (viii.).

In all this we have the hand of God Himself exalting the merit of Jesus, weighing Him in His dignities known in heaven and on earth. The soul

is invited in the most pressing manner to come, and be present at this grand work, at this divine proof of the merit of Jesus.

Just so the congregation of Israel was commanded to wait at the door of the Tabernacle, in order that each for himself should contemplate and know how pleased with the priest God was; so that each, however large the congregation was, should have, personally, individually, all liberty to resign himself to the care and intercession of Aaron. (Lev. viii., ix.) It was a matter which concerned each individually; and the same liberty should also appertain to every one of us individually.

The soul is the thing which concerns ourselves; for it is written that "none can by any means redeem his brother": and it is ourselves who should know the divine remedy, ourselves who should possess it. It is not a faithful brother who can hear and believe for us; it is not a church which can represent us; we must be at the door of the tabernacle ourselves; we have ourselves to know the worth of Jesus in the eyes of God, and the Epistle to the Hebrews is commissioned to reveal this secret in the holy of holies. It is addressed, not to a certain order of privileged persons, but to us all, in order that there we may gather the blessed fruits of this ensured supply which has been stored in Him.

It is not the question in this epistle of a particular church, nor of a class of privileged persons, as is very often thought and said; but it is the voice of the Spirit addressing itself directly to the soul, in order that it may learn to know for itself Him in whom God has placed the help which is necessary to it. In this epistle our soul breathes,

in some sort, the perfume of the plain which the Lord has blessed, and faith breathes the perfume of Christ; it enjoys Christ as God Himself enjoys Him; and we have the divine light in our hearts, we are converted from darkness to the light of God. In a word, God becomes our own.

There is yet another thing in this epistle: it makes us understand in what characters God has set this exclusive value on Christ; and these characters are such as fully answer to our necessities. The Victim or the Sacrifice (ix. 14); the Priest (vii.); the Prophet or Teacher (ii. 1-4); the Captain who brings His own glory (ii. 10); and in all these qualities, as in each of them separately, we see Him estimated in the most exact manner by the hand of God, and we find Him perfectly what it is needful He should be, for persons so wretched as we are.

According to God, Jesus is a Victim perfectly suited to purify a Priest perfectly suited to intercede, a Prophet perfectly suited to instruct, and a Guide perfectly suited to transport us safe and sound unto glory. There is that precisely which we need.

This epistle traces our books of travels, in leaving our place of exile as sinners, up to our dwelling in glory, where we shall be in the companionship of Jesus. Yes, we clearly read there our rights, and we rest on Jesus as our Victim, our Priest, our Prophet, and our Guide; because God has given Him all that is possible of worth in these qualities with which He is endowed for us; and God has appreciated Him because of His work, because of His person, because of His obedience, because He has shed His blood, and fully accomplished the will of God for us.

An Inspired "Nevertheless."

THE word which forms the heading of this paper occurs in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the last verse. It is a very important word, as indicating what we are all so prone to forget, that there are two sides to every question, and in particular to the great question before the apostle's mind in this passage. He is speaking of the subject of marriage, and of the relative duties of husband and wife, and he uses as an illustration the great mystery of Christ and the Church.

Now, there are two sides to this subject. There is a heavenly side and there is an earthly side. We want them both. We cannot dispense with either; and the Holy Ghost has, in His infinite wisdom, bound them indissolubly together by the little word "nevertheless." And may we not say, What God has joined together let not man put asunder? It is quite true, blessedly true, that the Church's relation to Christ is heavenly; that the Church is called to know, rejoice in, feed upon, walk with, follow, and be conformed to, a heavenly Christ.

All this is what we may well call vital and fundamental truth, which cannot for a moment be given up or lost sight of, without giving up so far the heavenly side of Christianity.

But are we not in danger of forgetting the practical application of all this to our present walk on the earth, amid the stern realities of actual life day by day? Are not husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, earthly relationships? Unquestionably. True it is they are formed upon a heavenly model, and to be carried

out after a heavenly pattern, as they also rest upon a heavenly base.

But still they are relationships in nature, formed on the earth, and to be carried out in daily life. There will be no such relationships in heaven. They do not belong to the resurrection state. They belong to nature, to earth, to our time condition, and we are called to walk in them as Christian men, women, and children, and to glorify God by our spirit and temper and manner, our whole deportment therein, from hour to hour and from day to day.

Thus, for example, of what use is it for a man to traffic in lofty theories respecting the heavenly relationships of Christ and the Church, while he fails, every day of his life, in his earthly relationship as a husband? His wife is neglected; treated, it may be, coldly or harshly; she is not nourished, cherished, sustained and ministered to according to the heavenly model of Christ and His Church.

No doubt the same pointed question may be asked in reference to the wife, and to all the other sacred relationships of our earthly and natural existence, for "there are two sides to every question."

Hence the very great importance of the apostle's "nevertheless." Without doubt it has a wide application. It is most evident that the Holy Ghost anticipated the need of such a qualifying, modifying, regulating clause, when, having descanted upon the heavenly side of the subject of marriage, He adds, "Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Christian reader, let us remember the two sides.

Let us deeply ponder the inspired "nevertheless." We may rest assured there is a need of it. There is the most urgent need of the practical application of divine and heavenly truth to our natural relationships and earthly ways. We have to remember that God recognizes nature, else *why* have we marriage? *Flesh* is not recognized, but *nature* is; and even admitted as a teacher. (1 Corinthians xi. 14.) We are not yet actually in heaven. We are there, thank God, as to our standing, there in spirit, there in principle, there by faith. Our life, our portion, our hope, our home is there, because Christ is there.

But we are here on this earth called to represent Christ in this world as He represents us in heaven. God views us as men, women, and children called to tread the sand of the desert and to meet the positive realities of daily life. Life is a reality, an actual, *bonâ fide*, practical reality; and our God has provided for us, in view of this fact, by the priestly ministry of Christ on high; and by the ministry of the Holy Ghost and the teachings of Holy Scripture here below. We must have what is real to meet what is real. We are not called, thank God, to be occupied with visionary notions, with empty theories, with a powerless sentimentality, nor even with one-sided truth. No; we are called to be real, genuine, sound, practical Christian men, women, and children. We are called to display, in our daily history here on this earth, the practical results of that which we know and enjoy by faith in heaven. In one word, we must never forget that when the very highest truths are being unfolded before us, there is a healthful and holy application of these truths indicated by the inspired "nevertheless."

The Character of the Second Epistle of Peter.

WE shall find in this epistle, and in Jude, the Spirit anticipates the corruption that was about to set in. It is not spiritual corruption, either in the second chapter of this epistle or in Jude, it is moral corruption. "The dog returns to its vomit."

When the whole progress of Christendom is laid open to the prophetic vision, it is well for *us* to know these things before, that we may be kept alive in soul and able to meet it. The Spirit calls to great activity. Do you like that? The Spirit of God would not have us dull and stupid. He calls to living action. He would have us take notice of the moral evil around, and of the glories of the kingdom within.

Would you have your souls slumber? This that we are called to is very contrary to the heaviness and stupidity of nature, but it is very grateful to the renewed nature. The more in health your body is the more you *enjoy* health, the more you delight in the activity of your powers.

So with the renewed nature. I want to *value* my new nature. My eye, hand, foot, etc., I have not put into activity; they *act*. So with the renewed nature. It may cost the old nature plenty of grievance and trouble, but the more the new nature is called into action the happier we are.

Is that burdensome to you, plenty to do? The Spirit of God gives all the rich glories of Christ, all the blessed discoveries of the testimonies of His love; but you are called into action by them. The Second Peter calls you to acquaint yourself with the corruption, the *moral* corruption, that is to set in, in the progress of Christendom, "Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness."

In order to meet that the activity of life is needed. The Spirit of God calls on each one of us (let us not refuse it) to cherish a holy perception of the state of things. It is not here ecclesiastical corruption or doctrinal pravity; that we have in other epistles—ecclesiastical corruption in 2 Timothy and doctrinal pravity in 1 Timothy. *Here* we have *moral* pravity; and that which can keep saints in the midst of it is set before us in chapter i. Activity is needed.

Do you value such activity? Do you welcome something more than the mere *moral sense* which regulates the systems of the world? Would you accept of that? Or do you welcome the intensity of the *holiness* of God? We want it, beloved, from the very form of things around us. It is not the *Body* here recognized, but your own separate selves. Each one is addressed. Each individual is called to listen to the voice of Him who speaks from the Sanctuary of God.

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you," etc. "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain," etc. To our glory? No! but to "life and godliness." We look for new heavens and a *new earth*; not the setting forth of His *glory* in the Kingdom here, but new heavens, etc., wherein dwelleth righteousness; that the one character he mentions because the object is to set forth the holiness and righteousness of God in the midst of all this pravity. He does not set forth the *glories* of the heavenly places nor the glories of the earthly Messiah, but confines his view to that one character, "New heavens and a new earth, wherein *dwelleth* righteousness."

Do you love the thought of heaven as a place

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of *holiness* and purity, where the flesh will never enter, for it will have done its work?

All that presents itself there to your senses will be as *pure* as *bright*. We want to stir up our "pure minds by way of remembrance." We want to stay ourselves upon His own thoughts. The state of the world is recognized by Him.

He has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. Not here *justification* of the soul spoken of. That we have elsewhere.

Is it to make you *happy* these "promises" are given? No! "That by these ye may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption," etc. That is the use made of the "promises" by the Spirit of God here. We should use them to make us happy, but it is a further use here.

Beloved, tell me one secret of your souls. Do you find the *sanctifying power* of the promises? Will the promises lead me into the scene of Christ's glory and lead me into paths of corruption? Impossible! I cannot be left a lover of my corruptions, if brought into the presence of God by them.

"Having escaped," etc. What dignity it puts upon us! We want to value our dignity more. We ought to know it too well to condescend to lusts of the eye, the flesh, etc. We ought to know and value the dignity of being in company with Him who was the carpenter's Son too well to degrade ourselves by loving this present world.

You have started with the divine nature, and are you cherishing those living sensibilities of the renewed soul that leave the *corruption* of the world as well as its judgment *behind*? Should we not be setting our eyes on the coming glory of Christ, and track the interval in the spirit of holiness?

It is that which leads to the "abundant en-

trance." If you are entering an *unknown* way, a *new* door, you have to be finding your way, exploring the pathway, but the "abundant entrance" implies knowing the way, being familiar with it. There is nothing here about the *title* to it, but *entrance*. The house belongs to me and I know the way in. True, *title* to be there is the ground of everything, but he speaks to me of *more*. The way should be consistent with the end to which I am going. He takes me from faith to virtue, from virtue to knowledge, etc., and if I am going on thus my path is morally consistent with the home to which I am going.

Again I say, There is no thought of *title* here, there is no title but *Jesus*; but would it satisfy the Spirit of God to be always talking to us of our title? No! That is already settled.

Why is it "everlasting kingdom"? *He* has the *sceptre* truly, but it is because it is a righteous sceptre, therefore that kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. The kingdoms of the beasts are gone one after another, because of corruption, lust, etc.; but this is an *everlasting* kingdom. Here he is putting the soul into some activity. If in a healthy condition this will be welcome. Why must there be activity? Because we want to know "the path of life"—"Thou wilt show me the path of life." The Spirit introduces each one into this.

There is one thing impresses one's soul more than anything. It is the moral relaxation of an easy profession of grace. Peter and Jude treat this; namely, "turning grace into lasciviousness."

May we take the word of exhortation and beware lest we, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from our own steadfastness, but "grow in grace."