

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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ERRATUM, PAGE 3.

There must be holiness, or we cannot have to say to God; but we do not get fulness of communion and blessing in it, and therefore we read that as soon as they had eaten the Passover they were to turn in the morning and go to their tents.

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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).

## **"Thou Shalt Surely Rejoice."**

(Read Deuteronomy xvi. 1-15.)

**T**HE three great feasts of which we read here were the feasts of gathering "at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name in." All the males were to go up there; all the people were to be gathered up round the Lord.

There was the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, these three; and connected with the Passover, though not exactly the same thing, was the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

In Acts ii. we read: "When the day of Pentecost was *fully* come"; and then follows the fulfilment, that of which this feast was the type.

But of the Feast of Tabernacles there is no present accomplishment. It is after the harvest

and after the vintage. It is the millennial time of rest after the discriminating judgment of God has taken place, and after the treading of the wine-press, His complete vengeance on the adversaries. (Rev. xix. 15.) Then this feast comes in; it is the rest remaining for God's people. They dwelt in booths as a sign that they had been strangers and pilgrims, that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt. I just say this that we may see the bearing of these feasts.

With the first of them we are all familiar, namely, the Passover, the death of Christ. And the unleavened bread we get the apostle himself applying in Corinthians: "Let us keep the feast; not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

One other point I would notice as to the Feast of Pentecost, that we may apprehend it better, and that is, that it was connected with "the morrow after the sabbath." It is outside the old creation and all that has to do with it. It has to do with Adam innocent no more than with Adam guilty. Satan's power, and sin, and death, and judgment, all that is past and gone; man, in the person of Christ, has got beyond it, is identified with Him before God in the new creation. That is Pentecost. (Lev. xxiii. 15,16.)

"Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, even the bread of affliction." Sometimes, I do not say *always*, we are apt to remain in this Feast of Unleavened Bread, and not get on sufficiently to the others. It is all right, of course, that we should have to do with it; we must have holiness: "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Thou camest forth from the land of

Egypt in haste." Pharaoh (type of Satan), was behind them, and they were just escaping from the judgment. It is simply deliverance. You get out of Egypt in haste; you are obliged to put the dough on your shoulder as fast as you can, that you may not be caught by the judgment; and so you have the seven days of unleavened bread. It is deliverance, but it is occupation with the state in which you were when you were delivered, so it is "the bread of affliction." There must be holiness, or we cannot have to say to God; but we do not get fulness of communion and blessing in it, and therefore we read that as soon as they had eaten go to their tents. (v. 7; Heb. xii. 14.)

But when you come to the day of Pentecost you get this: "Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God, with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee."

There is not a bit of that in the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There they had to escape, and that was all, but here I get the heart satisfied with the Holy Ghost. They had the fruits of the land now; they had that which they were brought *into*, and not only that which they brought *out of*.

Of course, that which they were brought out of is not to be forgotten; we shall not forget it in heaven; it is the Lamb slain that is the foundation of everything. But I have more than that here: I have the free-will offering of thanksgiving and praise. But even that is according to the *measure* in which the Lord our God has blessed us; and in that "thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God." And then we find the fulness of grace: it is "with thy son, and thy daughter, and thy

man-servant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you."

So I get here these two things with joy: the freewill offering to God, and thanksgiving and praise; and, having these things in our hearts, we have everything except the glory. We have life, we have righteousness, we have Christ Himself; we have all that the Father's love and the Son's love can give us by the Holy Ghost. I do not say we *enjoy* it all, but everything in that sense we have got into; we have actual possession of it all in heaven; the love of God is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." (Rom. v. 5.) So the strangers, and the widows, and all can rejoice.

And then, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." That is, there must be present obedience, and the remembrance that we were bondmen, and then the heart free for the things that are God's. There is the enjoyment through the Holy Ghost of the things that are freely given us of God: "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. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit"; and "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." (1 Cor. ii. 9; 2 Cor. iii. 17.) God's righteousness is settled, the conscience is perfect, and we are in that place in spirit where we can be occupied with God Himself, and not merely with what He has given us. (Rom. v. 11.)

After this comes the Feast of Tabernacles, "after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy



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wine”; after the judgment, as we have seen. That is the reason that, where it is spoken of in John vii., the Lord says He could not go up to that feast; it will be the millennial glory, and He would not go to that. But afterwards He goes up, “as it were in secret,” and on the eighth day, “that great day of the feast,” He cries, “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.” He lets us into the new week of heavenly glory, and in the Holy Ghost we do realize it, though we are not in it yet.

Another characteristic is that it is not “according as” now, as it was in the Feast of Pentecost, but it is “because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in *all* . . . therefore thou shalt *surely* rejoice.” It was all right to come out, and eat the Passover, and go to your tents in the morning, saying what poor wretched sinners you were. It is all right to remember that fact all the days of your life. We shall remember the Lamb slain in the glory. I have the sense that holiness *must* be, and I go with a personal, individual sense of it, and sit in my tent to keep the feast of unleavened bread, and bless God for having delivered me from that in which I was.

And besides this I find that I have got into an entirely new place, a place in which God has made a habitation for Himself. I am risen; I am in the new creation; it is a new thing altogether, and the old is all done with; and so I come with a free-will offering, and I worship as I realize the coming down from God of all the blessings that He has given us in the Holy Ghost. Thus, in Pentecost, it is according to my spirituality that I rejoice.

It is not merely that I have been delivered, but that God's heart is to *give* to me, and God sees flowing out from me praise and thanksgiving according to the spiritual state of my soul.

But in heavenly places I go a little farther and discover what I have in Christ. In Him I find that "all things" are mine, both "things present" and "things *to come*," and there I can rejoice *always*; there I can "*surely* rejoice." How could a person, if he had not spiritual power, think of *eternal* praise? *Now* it is according to the measure of our spirituality, but *then* it will be because He *hath* blessed us in all things. God's heart satisfied with seeing us in the full blessing of all He has brought us into; Christ's heart satisfied with seeing of the travail of His soul; the saint's heart satisfied with being fully like Him and with Him, and He fully glorified.

This is where God has set us; and how far, beloved friends, do your hearts go with it? It will be surely the Lamb that was slain there; but in what measure does my soul get hold of the second feast, and say, "According as the Lord my God has blessed me"? And then how far can my soul, even now, enter into all the blessing which God has prepared for them that love Him, having no present but what is future? We are strangers and pilgrims here; but if we are right our conversation will be up there "where Christ sitteth." (Col. iii. 1.) God grant that it may be so in our hearts.

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## **Gift without Godliness.**

(Read 1 Samuel viii.-xiii.)

**S**AUL, the son of Kish, is a solemn and sad illustration of the possession of a gift unaccompanied by life to God, a gift poured into an unpurged, unsanctified vessel.

He was the fruit of the revolted heart of Israel. It was their departure from the Lord which called him forth. And accordingly the Lord Himself (if I may so speak), and Samuel were in the secret of what manner of a king this Saul would be. (viii.) He could not have been a man after the Lord's heart, because he was the fruit of the people's heart and desire.

David is different; he is God's gift to the people, proceeding from Himself. (xiii. 14.)

Saul is, however, bestowed on the people according to men's desire; duly anointed, and endowed, and turned into another man; that is, made a gifted instrument, or a fitted vessel, for the service of Israel. (ix.)

His appointment to the kingdom is verified in the mouth of witnesses and the accomplishment of signs; and then he has to do as occasion demands, to obey the word of the Lord. (x. 7, 8.)

Thus he is set a-going. But there is no exercise of conscience; no godly acceptance of his place as under God; nothing that bespeaks a change in the "scent" or "taste" of nature; all that we see in Saul is a filled vessel, or a gifted instrument. (Jer. xlviii. 11.)

An occasion arises to make a demand on him. This is the haughty challenge of Nahash the Ammonite. It was just such an occasion as calls forth the exercise of his gift. He heads an army.

under the energy of the Spirit, contends with the foe, and humbles the pride of the king of Ammon. (xi.)

The people are all enthusiasm. They are for taking vengeance at once on the men who had before despised the son of Kish. For the gift in his hand had now served them, working a great deliverance from a proud oppressor; and they rejoice in the king. They shelter under his shadow, indifferent, so that it shelter them, whether it be the shadow of a bramble or of a cedar. (Judg. ix. 15.)

Samuel, however, is not of that mind. This mere exercise of gift, or display of power, is not what satisfies him. Of course he owns the deliverance, and the anointing of the hand which had wrought it. But he is not all joy as the people are. There is a chastened mind in him. He cannot but remember the rock out of which this king was hewn, the word of the Lord respecting him, and the whole complexion of the present moment. (Isa. li. 1.) He therefore warns the people, and speaks as intimating that they would do well to moderate their exultation.

Saul's gift had been indeed vindicated. But Saul himself had not been as yet proved. An occasion had tested the gift; but the commandment had not yet tested the heart of the king. Samuel's joy is, therefore, postponed. (xii.)

But the time of the commandment came, and the word of the Lord tried him. (Ps. cv. 19.) The obedience of Saul to the Lord, and not his gift in the Spirit, was now to be assayed. (xiii. 8-12.)

It was a serious moment. I feel it to be so, as I write upon it. The vessel had disbursed the treasure committed to it; but what was the vessel

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itself? How was the king's heart before God? His hand, in the skill and strength of the Spirit, had reduced the Ammonites; but is he himself reduced to the obedience of his divine Lord? This is the question now.

He had stood against the foe to the administration of the people; but the word of commandment has now to try how he stands with God. This is solemn. Gift may pass beyond grace; as form may be without power. And Saul's heart toward God is found hollow, though his hand had exercised its talent to admiration. The Lord give us to heed this!

In the times of the New Testament, the Corinthians "came behind in no gift"; but withal there was moral relaxation, and the need of a girding of themselves afresh in the life and vigour of personal godliness. Love of ease, self-indulgence in many ways, and the habits of a Corinthian nature, are much prevailing. The First Epistle tells us all this. (1 Cor. i. 7; iv. 8.)

The gifted Paul, however, was a different one from the gifted Corinthian. He kept his body under, while he preached to others. His gift was not in a Corinthian vessel. And as he says to Timothy, so we may be sure did he exercise himself, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. iv. 16.)

Balaam had the gift of a prophet, and so had Caiaphas the high priest; and Saul had the gift of a king. All were in the Spirit, or under the anointing; but the vessels were unclean. It is all a serious story, and may find its moral uses now-a-days.

But further. In these chapters Saul also witnesses that there may be some attractive exercises of nature; which, however, are not to be trusted. He owns himself as nobody when Samuel talks of the kingdom to him. He was little in his own eyes then. When the lot was being cast, he "hid himself among the stuff." (x. 23.) In the day of his victory he will have none of his adversaries touched. (xi. 13.) But with all this, there was no principle of obedience in him, no heart subject to God.

It is, indeed, a solemn picture: a splendid gift in an unclean vessel, and much showy exercise of affection, without a subject heart!

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If the life of the soul does not answer to the gifts [of the Spirit], the exercise of power becomes only the forerunner of failure. It is thus that we see Elijah fleeing before Jezebel, after having done such great things before all Israel.

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Paul laboured to please Christ, whatever might be the class in which he would be found at the coming of the Lord, whether among those who have fallen asleep before, or among those who will be still remaining, living on earth, when He comes. (2 Cor. v. 9, 10.)

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Our business is to act on God's word, looking to Him for grace and strength as regards ourselves and others.

## **Meditations on the First Epistle of John.**

### **I.**

**I**N commencing our meditations on this Epistle we must be prepared to meet with personal truth; no secrets about heavenly and earthly things, Jews or Gentiles. We do not find those things in John. Of course, I mean as the Holy Ghost speaks by John. But we have more primary matter; the most intense personality; and this is equally observable in the Gospel of John as in the Epistle.

In the Gospel we find the Son of God, the Saviour, in close contact with the sinner; not the twelve apostles as such, but Jesus Himself in close intimacy with each sinner. There can be no matter of deeper interest than this. We must have the personal question settled, as a primary thing, before we can look abroad. We must settle our conscience, our own questions, *first*.

And this is the beautiful work that characterizes John's Gospel. In it we see Jesus with the sinner; in the Epistle, Jesus with the saint, that is, sinner saved by grace. The woman of Samaria, Nicodemus, the impotent man, the blind man, and other cases in the Gospel, show us this deep, personal communication. So, in the Epistles the Holy Ghost is personal in addressing saints; it is not the Church, but fathers, young men, children, the elect lady, and Gaius.

And this personality is beautiful. Suppose the dispensation to be in ruins (as it is), it never puts a cloud on the atmosphere which John breathes; it never can disturb it. It is Christ and you; Christ and the sinner; Christ and the saint.

This same character may be seen in the early chapters of Genesis. We have personal matter until we come to Enoch and Noah. Then we have heaven peopled with Enochs, and earth with Noahs. This is dispensational truth; but it is not opened in the earlier chapters. We must be deeply personal before we can enter on these things.

The character of John's writings is blessedly welcome. It enables saints, though walking apart, to greet one another. There is much difficulty and trouble, and many strange elements are abroad; but when we get into this atmosphere it is as calm as the depths of the sea: *myself and God!*

Is there any such consolation? "If the foundations be destroyed" (and do you not believe they are? I do truly), "what shall righteous do! The Lord is in His holy temple." There I can meet Him. The Lord is not destroyed. "He sitteth above the water-floods," and there I rest with Him. Not that I am not to recognize the confusion here, and to know where I am, and to behave myself.

The Lord Jesus did this in His time. Am I entitled to say this? Yes, by all His life, and especially by Matthew xxii. Here the Lord was brought into collision with confusion. Cæsar's coin circulating in Emmanuel's land was a type of confusion; and how should a Jew behave himself? So they tried to puzzle the Lord. Here is the question: Cæsar's coin is in the land, yet God is the God of Israel. What to do? And this confusion Jesus recognized, and met it, as you are to do now.

If you say you do not know how, more shame



for you! You say you cannot do it like Him. True. But you are told to have His mind: "Let this mind be in you," etc. (Phil. ii.) He knew how to recognize the claims of Cæsar. Many retire from the view, but the duty of the soul is to be with Christ, and to return *with Him* into confusion, with knowledge, as Gambold has it:—

"Go forth, and serve Him while 'tis day,  
Yet never leave that sweet retreat."

I must possess the calmness of Him who sits above the water-floods; but while keeping that, I come down and recognize the confusion around, and I know how to behave myself. If I fail in either of these things I fail in reflecting Christ Jesus. I do not say it is a question of life, but it is of conduct.

With these remarks we commence meditating on John's Epistle.

Here, in 1 John i. 1-4, we are in company with the first chapters of Genesis. God had not shown the heavenlies, but Himself and Adam; the devil and Adam; personal things, and so true. "The Life was manifested." And mark the august character in which the truth breaks forth, intimating the eternal Sonship. It could never have been written, "That eternal life which was with THE FATHER," had Jesus been other than the eternal Son. Blessed thought!

Could omniscience or omnipotence satisfy my soul? Could glory, even divine glory? I see them all; but what would they be to me without relationship? And oh! how blessed to see it as in heaven, between the Father and the Son!

What would even natural life be, if it did not introduce us to relationship? The moment life comes, relationship comes with it; otherwise it

would not be worth having. How blessed, yea, how affectionate a thought!

And such a thought is brought you. Could you do without it? Would it suit you to be restored without being related? Or can you say you are connected, not related?

I will answer for it: you cannot.

Divine mystery! Yes, you may say, it is a mystery, and that mystery a witness that I am dealing with the unapproachable, the living God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

I welcome the mystery; I gaze upon it; but not at a distance. It is brought to be *mine*. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." It is brought down amongst us, and without the relationship there can be no fulness of joy.

Does it give fulness of joy to be brought back, and left outside the door? Will that satisfy you? Do you not yearn after the pulses of a child and the spirit of adoption? No fulness of joy without relationship! To know the Father and the Son is fulness of joy. Where can there be anything more blessed?

In Hebrews and Ephesians we have the conscience perfected, and the heavens opened; but, as one has remarked, there is difference between Paul and John: that Paul is heavenly, John is divine; Paul speaks of heavenly mysteries, John of divine mysteries.

"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." (v. 5.)

Here we find our proper place in light (still it is personal truth). This message was a direct contradiction of Satan to Eve. Satan's lie was.

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There is nothing but darkness in God. You shall not eat of the tree because you would be like Himself. This was the lie that robbed of life, because it robbed of God.

By this lie all was lost to Adam:—God, life, Eden. Everything was lost as soon as the lie was listened to.

The Lord Jesus appeared as the Repairer of this breach; this and all others. The devil's lie said, No love or light in God. This message says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

The belief of this message is evangelic faith. If I do not walk in the certainty that I have been extricated from the lie of Satan, I do not know God in the light.

I allow it is in the nature of the flesh to suspect the truth of God; but are you conscious of life and truth, by which you are extricated from Satan's lie? In that light you have fellowship with the Father and with the Son!

What was Adam's fellowship? Was it on the ground of blood-shedding? No, but of innocence. There is none saved but by the blood that cleanses from all sin. Adam's fellowship (as a creature) continued as long as his innocence. We know not the time; nor does it matter. Now, if we have such a thought as returning to communion of innocence, there is not a fragment of truth in us, not a ray of light. We must take our title from this substratum, "poor sinners," if we would walk in light and life. Nothing can be grander; but the blood of Christ is the foundation. Grand consideration! magnificent prerogative! "To walk in the light as He is in the light."

And now how to conduct ourselves; how, in confusion; how, in communion?

On the calm and settled foundation of the blood of Christ.

Do you call it a severe task? A blessed task! Shame if it is not! There is belief and there is a remedy for mistakes; but we should know how to behave ourselves.

Some speak of "sinless perfection." If I do so I know not what I am. Sinlessness is for heaven, not for faith. Sinlessness for heaven; struggles now. The Third of Philippians gives us that. Paul has Christ as this perfection, and he himself is struggling up-hill. We shall have sinlessness in resurrection; till then, conflict.

I do not charge this doctrine in its consequences, on the proposers of it; but, if proposed to me, I detest the very thought of it.

What am I to do with sin? To confess it. "He is faithful and just," that is, faithful and just to the blood and intercession of Christ "to forgive us our sins." I am left judicially without a speck.

Is there a return to innocence? No, I deny it. Innocence is not the ground of my communion; nor is sinlessness the power of it.

Can we then say the blood gives license to the lusts? Could a saint say so? When Adam sinned he lost everything. If the saint sins he has an Advocate

And is God afraid to commit you to such principles? Dare you take advantage of them? The Lord resents such a thought. "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." (Gal. v. 13.)

It is a wonderful calling. If I sin I am not turned out; I have an Advocate. It is a "high calling"; not alone in Christ Jesus, but in the Son of the Father.

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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 True Idea of Worship.

"My cup runneth over." (Ps. xxiii. 5.)

WHEN the Master has so filled the vessel that it overflows; when the heart is filled with truth, "as the truth is in Jesus," and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it overflows in thanksgiving and praise; it worships God, who is a Spirit, "in spirit and in truth." (Eph. iv. 21; Rom. viii. 9; John iv. 23.) The heart of the guest, we may say, responds to the kindness of the host. But, plainly, that which comes down from God to the soul in grace, reascends from the soul to Him in grateful praise. Like the curling smoke from the golden altar of incense, it ascends in the sweet odours of acceptable worship. (Exod. xxx. 1-4, 6-8.)

It is perfectly clear that a cup running over can hold no more; that which is poured in only

increases its overflow. But what, may I ask, are the spiritual feelings of a soul that answers to this figure? (Ps. xxiii. 5.) They are heavenly in their character, and produced by the Holy Spirit. (Eph. ii. 18.)

Nothing on earth comes so near the employment of heaven as worship. It will be our happy employment throughout eternity. But the soul must, in spirit, be in heaven, in the holy of holies, before it reaches this condition; and that is where the Christian should always be. (Heb. x. 19-22.) He is in Christ, and Christ fills all heaven with His glory. In God's account there is no outer-court worship now; it must be priestly, and inside the veil.

When the heart of the worshipper answers to the overflowing cup it is evidently completely filled up; not a corner is left empty. This is the main thought. Spiritually, it feels that every wish is met, every desire is satisfied, and all the longings of the soul perfectly answered.

True, the worshipper is not yet in resurrection glory, but he knows and feels that he has everything excepting glory. *That* he waits for, but not uncertainly. "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. v. 5.)

The *hope* which properly belongs to righteousness is *glory*. We have the righteousness now, in Christ; we wait for the glory. And yet in another sense we have the glory too, as the Lord Himself says, "And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them." (John xvii. 22.) And even in a still closer way we may say that we have it now, according to what the apostle says to the Colossians: "Which is Christ in *you*, the

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hope of glory." (Col. i. 27.) Here it may be said that we are already *linked* with the glory: "Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory." But we wait for the glory of God in *full manifestation*. (Col. iii. 4.)

It may be well to notice the difference between *prayer* and *worship*, nearly allied though they be to each other, and even suitably mingled together, as "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks." (1 Tim. ii. 1.) We have always much to give thanks for; still, the two things in themselves are quite distinct. We bring our *empty* cups to the prayer-meeting, and beg and beseech our God and Father to fill them. This shows our knowledge of God and our confidence in Him; and, if we pray in faith, the oil may flow until every vessel is filled. (2 Kings iv.) Thus, prayer may lead to worship, as preaching the gospel to the world and teaching God's people may do. Nevertheless, it is well to understand the difference between prayer, preaching, teaching, and worship. They are each most important in themselves, and all of God, and ought not to be confounded.

In the preaching of the gospel, God is addressing the world; in teaching, He is speaking to his saints; but in worship we address God, we render adoration to Him. Ministry is from God to man; worship is from man to God. Hardly any two things could be more distinct, and yet the distinction is rarely seen.

True worship may be produced by any of the three services named, and even a spirit of worship may be enjoyed when engaged in them; and so much the better when it is so; but in Christian worship we draw near to God as our Father in

Christ Jesus, and address ourselves to Him. When we know God as He has revealed Himself in the Person and work of Christ, we have holy liberty in His presence, and render the praise, thanksgiving and adoration of an overflowing heart.

The term "cup" is frequently and variously used in Scripture. Sometimes it is the symbol of joy, and sometimes of sorrow. In the verse before us, the cup running over is the expression of overflowing joy, and is in full harmony with the position of the anointed believer. The table which Jehovah had prepared for His weary pilgrim more than supplied all his need. Nothing was wanting. The provision was full, and divinely suited to his condition. There was no need to remind the Host of something that had been forgotten. Asking for this or for that at such a table, would be contrary to every feeling of the satisfied guest; unless it were, in heart, for more gratitude, more suited thanksgiving.

Ought we not to be filled with this spirit when at the Lord's Supper? Most surely, and in the highest sense. May we not at least say that, in this beautiful verse, we have an *illustration* of the Lord's Supper, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the worship of the assembly of God? Surely we may, for the idea of worship is more in connection with the assembly than with the individual Christian. The joy of others increases our joy, and strengthens our worship.

This truth is so beautifully and touchingly set before us in Deuteronomy xxvi. that we must notice it.

The worshipper already in the land that had been promised to the fathers, brings his basket

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of first-fruits, the growth of that land; and the priest presents it before the Lord his God. He worships *in the land*, and only presents to Jehovah *the fruits of the land*.

Caanan is the type of heaven, and we can only worship God when we are there in spirit, and with the growth of that happy land. Love, joy, holiness, praise, thanksgiving and adoration, grow abundantly in our heavenly Caanan.

But the joy of the redeemed Israelite in the land was shared with others. He did not forget his own once miserable condition in the land of Egypt, though now redeemed out of it: "A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt." (Deut. xxvi. 5.) In his new joy he invites the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, to share his abundance.

And this was not all. He maintained a walk of practical holiness, without which there can be no worship: "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead; but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that Thou hast commanded me." (v.14.)

And now in the largeness of his heart he embraces all Israel: "Look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Thy people Israel, and the land which Thou hast given us, as Thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey." (v. 15.)

True benevolence, largeness of heart, is sure to accompany a spirit of heavenly worship: "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise

to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good and communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. xiii. 15, 16.)

The sacrifice of Christ, which is commemorated in the breaking of bread, is the *sole* foundation of true worship; and the Holy Spirit present in the assembly is the only *power* by which God can be worshipped acceptably. It would be the most daring presumption for any one to draw near to God as a worshipper unless he knew that all his guilt was removed, and that he was a new creature in Christ Jesus. But when we know that the blessed Lord, by the blood of His cross, has fully glorified God, blotted out all our sins, and cleansed us from all defilement, we have holy boldness to draw near to God as our Father. (Heb. x. 19.) But were it not for the cross of Christ, all must be judgment; but by means of that cross, all is grace, boundless grace. The rending of the veil from the top to the bottom is the divine witness to us that Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and opened up the way for us into the Holiest of all. In virtue of His atoning sacrifice there is now (glory be to God!) no question of sin between the worshipper and God. That question was fully gone into on the cross, and there settled, there closed, for ever. The same stroke which slew the Lamb also rent the veil, and laid open the way into the presence of infinite holiness, where the worshipper now stands without spot, and rejoices before the Lord his God.

That wondrous cross is the great centre of God's moral universe! To this centre God ever pointed, and the eye of faith ever looked forward,

until the Saviour came. And now we must ever turn to that cross as the centre of all our blessing, and the basis of all our worship, both on earth and in heaven, in time and throughout all eternity. The "new song" never could have been sung in heaven, and no hymn of praise could ever have been sung on earth by fallen man, but for the cross of Christ; and, but for that same cross, our cup must have been for ever a cup of trembling, in place of an overflowing cup of rejoicing.

"Oh! what a debt I owe to Him who shed His
blood,
And cleansed my soul, and gave me power to
stand before His God.
Saviour, and Lord! I own the riches of Thy
grace;
For I can call Thy God, my God; can bow
before His face.
Thy heavenly Father, too, I worship as my
own,
Who gave with Thee the Spirit's cry, to me
a son foreknown."

Having briefly dwelt on the only *foundation* of worship, the sacrifice of Christ, we will now refer to the only *power* of worship, the Holy Spirit.

When "born again" we receive a new nature, which is holy, and suited to the presence of God. It is also capable of enjoying Him, which truth surely gives us the highest thought of creature-happiness; and yet, as the apostle Paul says, that blessed state may be enjoyed even now: "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 11.)

Without this new nature there could be no worship. It is the *children* that the Father seeks to worship Him. Sonship is essential to worship. The Father delights in the worship of His children. Not only does He accept it, but He *seeks it*. Wondrous, gracious truth! Our God and Father *seeking* worshippers! "For the Father seeketh such to worship Him." (John iv. 23.)

Besides the accomplished work of redemption, the new birth, and our union with the risen Christ, the *gift of the Holy Spirit* is indispensable to Christian worship. Nothing can be plainer than our Lord's own teaching on this subject: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John iv.)

Here our Lord insists on the moral necessity of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in Christian worship. And surely He knows best what suits the Father who even then was "in the bosom of the Father." (John i. 18.) It is by the Spirit that even children of God understand, enjoy, and worship Him. God being a Spirit, He must be worshipped in His own nature, "in spirit." A son is of the same nature as his father.

As children, we are feeble and dependent; but we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." (Eph. iii. 16.) As children, we are ignorant and foolish, but the Holy Spirit communicates to us the mind of God, and gives us an understanding in divine things, so that we can draw near to Him in thought and feeling suited to His holy presence.

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It is the Holy Spirit dwelling in us who gives us the *consciousness* of our oneness with Christ, and our nearness to God. He is the seal of redemption, and the earnest of the inheritance. (Eph. i. 13, 14.) The anointing of the head with oil (Ps. xxiii. 5.) is like the "unction" that we receive of God, whereby we may know all things. (1 John ii. 20; 1 Cor. ii. 12.) And it is by the same Spirit that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, which love we may say, is the source of all our blessing, and the spring of all our worship. (Rom. v. 5.)

If, then, the Holy Spirit is thus absolutely necessary to the worship of Christians, surely it becomes a matter of first importance that He should have His right place in the assemblies of the saints; "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 13.) How can we render to God the glory due to His name, if the Spirit be quenched by any means, or practically displaced? This is a solemn question. Would not the contrast, so strongly drawn by the apostle, be in some way applicable in such a case: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh"? (Phil. iii. 3.)

Here it is not the *sin* of the flesh but the *religion* of the flesh against which the apostle warns us. In God's sight one is as bad as the other. The true worshippers are known by worshipping God "in the Spirit," and rejoicing "in Christ Jesus." The flesh can be very pious in its own way, and be largely occupied with good works; but it will

never "rejoice in Christ Jesus." It knows nothing of Christ as despised on earth, and honoured in heaven; nor of setting our affection on things above. But even when Christ has His right place in the heart, and the Holy Spirit is owned as the only power of worship, we have need to watch against mingling the thoughts of the flesh with the guidance of the Spirit. It will be the constant aim of the enemy, where he cannot substitute flesh for Spirit, to mingle the two.

One solemn question, one grand test, remains for each, for all: *Do I rejoice in Christ Jesus alone?* This is the true standard to judge by, the touchstone of spiritual worship. Do our souls answer to this standard? Is Christ our all in all? Before God, in His holy presence, are we *rejoicing in Christ Jesus alone?* He is the delight of the Father's heart; the object of the Spirit's testimony; the joy and glory of His people. Happy, thrice happy, they who, in this day of widespread fleshly pietism, "worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

"O God, we come with singing, because Thy
great High Priest

Our names to Thee is bringing, nor e'er forgets
the least:

For us He wears the mitre where holiness
shines bright;

For us His robes are whiter than heaven's
unsullied light."



Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

II.

WE do not find "the Messiah" in John, but "the Son," whose commission is from the Father's bosom. Matthew gives us the Messiah, whose mission was from the throne to Israel. The Father can place the child in full communion, varied light, whose rays sparkle every way.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not, And if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (ii. 1, 2.)

Here we have the Lamb of God for the sin of the world and in Jesus Christ the righteous, the Advocate for the sin of saints. No pardon but on such grounds. God cannot give up His righteousness for your salvation. Never! It all rests on the Righteous One. In that great propitiation is contained the righteousness of the throne of God; and this is a matter between my Father and *myself*; not learning secrets of dispensation, but alone in company with Him, with Whom every question is settled for ever.

When He is satisfied, it is high time you should be so. When God has taken it into His hands to reconcile sinners to *Himself*, it is high time for sinners to be satisfied. God has done it; let Christ look to it. Blessed to be able to say, Lord, Thou shalt answer for me!

As John proceeds in his Epistle, you can clearly perceive the spirit of personal application which characterizes it. He addresses not churches but

individuals. Nor is his address ecclesiastical, but moral.

This is great comfort: no discouragement around can touch the personal question. If the whole economy be gone to ruins, the individual thing remains untouched. Just as in Israel, when Jezebel was practising sin, what had that to do with the personal thing? Were there not seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal? They were not implicated in the ruin around. Again, in the days of Omri, what could be worse? Yet the Spirit was not straitened, as the apostle speaks.

In such a place John sets us in the very innermost circle, narrow and intimate. This is uniform with the spirit of John's writings. Do we not see it in the Gospel? The outer circle is drawn: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." (John i. 10.)

Was He straitened! No; but the circle narrows: "He came unto His own [the Jews], and His own received Him not." (John i. 11.)

That would not do; but the inner circle remains: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." (John i. 12.)

If the world, with its atheist heart, denies its Creator; if the Jew denies his Messiah; is grace to be reduced to inactivity? Never!

If earth deny Him room to work, God shall retire to heavenly activities (and this is the secret of Church calling). Can God remain passive because man is unbelieving? No, never!

Pregnant truth that tells, "Love never faileth"! If God were to give up, what would it

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be but the failure of love? "Love never faileth."
(1 Cor. xiii. 8.)

So, then, if the *world* and the *Jew* give up God, He will act with *individuals*, with as many as believe. This is the atmosphere of John; the Spirit looking upon ruins, separating and educating individuals.

Is there not confusion abroad? If you say there is not, you cannot have your eyes open. Saints here and saints there; but they cannot walk together!

God's grace is undisturbed; it is His work to conduct you; and this is the activity of grace in the innermost circle. When the Spirit is disappointed in one place, He turns to another.

John, dealing with personalities, unfolds the secrets and wonders of God's mind, and in hearing him you may listen as though you yourself were the only saint on the face of the earth. I may read it as though God were speaking to my own self.

John now speaks of true *knowledge*. We have all heard of the Gnostics of olden times, and their proud boast of knowledge. We are in danger from these things, many of us, and some in particular, who certainly have much knowledge. Ah! but the true knowledge is always linked with *obedience*. It is not poetic thoughts or high imaginations, but obedience.

Now, do you approve of the third verse: "Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments"? Do you not reject all speculations, all ideality? True knowledge is clothed with obedience. Anything else is rebellion. As another has said, "If we can sport, even while we speak the name of God, we have

the name without the substance." And so it is if we speak of knowledge without cultivating obedience.

The fourth verse shows that if we do not keep God's commandments, we are liars, to speak of knowledge, and thus serve the old liar.

It is thus "the love of God is perfected," that is, matured, brought to issue, exhibited. (v. 5.)

Again, the sixth verse brings another individual thing. If we boast of knowledge, let us show obedience! As James says, "I will show thee my faith by my works." (James ii. 18.) Do not you be talking after the fashion of the Gnostics. Show me your faith! This is a time when knowledge is increased, but if you turn to boasting, John says to you, "Show your knowledge by obedience." And this precept I would desire to retain; it is very healthful.

"From the beginning" is a common expression in these writings, and it may mean from all eternity, as in the early part of Genesis, which is closely connected with this Epistle; or it may be taken to mean from the beginning of Gospel times. "I write no new commandment"; and yet a new commandment, for since the resurrection of Jesus love has taken a new form. (v. 7.) Love is now dispensed in power. "The old commandment," as in the Gospel, "That ye love one another," is new since Jesus rose from the dead. Since then love has reached its meridian brightness, its noonday strength! And how can I say that? "Because as He is, so are we in this world," that is, since He rose. (iv. 17.)

Love has always been at work. Love planted Adam in the garden of Eden; love set Israel in Canaan; love sent forth the prophets; love sent

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Jesus into the world; but to take Jesus into the presence of God, and me with Him, is a new and bright phase of love.

"Darkness is past, and the true light now shineth!" (v. 8.) As we read in Canticles, "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." (Song of Sol. ii. 11, 12.)

"A *new* commandment," "which thing is true in *Him* and in you." Here we fail, we do not give God credit for His grace; yet there is nothing beyond or greater than the place He has put us in. Love is made perfect. (iv. 17.) Was Adam in Eden equal to *you* in *heaven*? Where does love shine brightest? Putting you in Christ, or Israel in Canaan? Love is an "old" commandment, but he has got a "new" character. With what title? "The precious blood of Christ!" and this is the point, (do you believe it?) that *where He is you are*.

Shall I then talk of light when I hate my brother? Can I hate him in the light? Impossible! If I talk of light, and yet hate my brother, I *lie*. (v. 9.)

Here, "little children," is a generic term. (v. 12.) It might have been "begotten ones," or "born ones." Whether fathers, young men, or little children in the family, our sins are forgiven. Forgiveness is a common thing; not distant and difficult of access, but common property. It was said to me once, "Scripture makes far less ado about the forgiveness of sins than conscience does"! The Epistle to the Hebrews takes for granted the forgiveness of sins. As begotten ones, your sins are forgiven.

Three generations in the family are mentioned. And here we may pause to ask what are "fathers," "young men," and "children" in the Church?

The "children" are those who are in the happy knowledge of the Father. Oh! to be a child! Oh! to enjoy our relationship as "little children"! There is nothing sweeter, no finer attainment. And do we not naturally look back to childhood? The Spirit gives that impression of the joy of tasted relationship.

"Young men" are girded with strength. No longer children, they go forth to battle. They go forth to war; yes, and with him in whom the world lieth. He beguiled Eve; the world has been in him ever since, and they go forth to war with him.

"Fathers" are those who "have known Him that is from the beginning." No longer little children, theirs is a meditative joy! They are able to gaze, meditate, and wonder as they decipher the ways of God. Theirs is a reflective, meditative worship.

These are fine distinctions.

And, now, what need the sinner care for what is around? What was it to the woman of Samaria that Israel was in confusion? She found herself alone with Christ, and got her own heart's questions answered! What care I how things are if I have this gravity of old age. A wondering gravity, is it not? exquisite, perfect, and simple, able to look on, able to gaze and wonder! No speculation, but meditation in the light of the Holy Ghost!

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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).

Largeness of Heart.

IT is one of our great difficulties at the present moment (indeed, it has ever been a difficulty) to combine a narrow path with a large heart. There is very much on all sides tending to produce isolation. We cannot deny it. Links of human friendship seem so fragile; so many things crop up to shake confidence; so many things which one cannot possibly sanction, that the path becomes more and more isolated.

All this is unquestionably true.

But we must be very careful as to how we meet this condition of things. We have little idea how much depends on the spirit in which we carry ourselves in the midst of scenes and circumstances which, all must admit, are peculiarly trying.

For example, I may retire in upon myself, and become bitter, morose, severe, repulsive, withered

up, having no heart for the Lord's people, for His service, for the holy and happy exercises of the assembly. I may become barren of good works, having no sympathy with the poor, the sick, the sorrowful; living in the narrow circle within which I have retired; thinking only of myself, my personal and family interests.

What, we may well inquire, can be more miserable than this? It is simply the most deplorable selfishness. But we do not see it, because we are blinded by our inordinate occupation with other people's failures.

Now, it is a very easy matter to find out flaws, foibles, and faults in our brethren and friends. But the question is, How are we to meet these things? Is it by retiring in upon ourselves? Never; no, never. To do this is to render ourselves as miserable in ourselves as we are worthless, and worse than worthless, to others.

There are few things more pitiable than what we call "a disappointed man." He is always finding fault with others. He has never discovered the real root of the matter, or the true *secret of dealing with it*. He has retired, but it is in upon himself. He is isolated, but his isolation is utterly false. He is miserable; and he will make all who come under his influence, all who are weak and foolish enough to listen to him, as miserable as himself. He has completely broken down in his practical career; he has succumbed to the difficulties of his time, and proved himself wholly unequal to meet the stern realities of actual life. And then, instead of seeing and confessing this, he retires into his own narrow circle, and finds fault with every one except himself.

How truly delightful and refreshing to turn from

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this dismal picture to the only perfect Man that ever trod this earth! His path was indeed an isolated one. None more so. He had no sympathy with the scene around Him. "The world knew Him not." "He came unto His own [Israel], and His own received Him not." (John i. 10, 11.) He looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but He found none. (Ps. lix. 20.) Even His own beloved disciples failed to sympathize with or understand Him. They slept on the mount of transfiguration, in the presence of His glory; they slept in the garden of Gethsemane, in the presence of His agony. They roused Him out of His sleep in the ship with their unbelieving fears; they were continually intruding upon Him with their ignorant questions and foolish notions.

How did He meet all this?

In perfect grace, patience and tenderness. He answered their questions; He corrected their notions; He hushed their fears; He solved their difficulties; He met their need; He made allowance for their infirmities; He gave them credit for devotedness in the moment of desertion; He looked at them through His own loving eyes, and loved them, notwithstanding all. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John xiii. 1.)

Christian reader, let us seek to drink into our blessed Master's spirit, and walk in His footsteps. Then our isolation will be of the right kind; and, though our path may be narrow, the heart will be large.

The Present Work of Christ for us.

WE have elsewhere dwelt upon that precious work which our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished for us, in the putting away of all our *sins*, and in the condemnation of *sin*, securing for us perfect remission of the former, and entire deliverance from the latter as a ruling power. (Heb. ix. 12, 17, 18; Rom. viii. 2-4.)

The Christian is one who is not only forgiven but delivered. Christ has died for him, and he has died with Christ. (Rom. vi. 6-8.) Hence he is free, as one who is raised from the dead, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is a new creation. He has passed from death unto life. Death and judgment are behind him, and nothing but glory before him. He possesses an unblotted title and an unclouded prospect.

Now, if all this is indeed true of every child of God (and Scripture says it is) what more do we want? Nothing, as to title; nothing, as to standing; nothing, as to hope. As to all these we have absolute, divine perfection.

But then our *state* is not perfect, our *walk* is not perfect. We are still in the body; compassed about with manifold infirmities; exposed to manifold temptations; liable to stumble, to fall, and to wander. We are unable of ourselves to think a right thought, or to keep ourselves for one moment in the blessed position into which grace has introduced us.

True it is, we have everlasting life, and we are linked to the living Head in heaven, by the Holy Ghost sent down to earth, so that we are eternally

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secure. Nothing can ever touch our life, inasmuch as it is "hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.)

But while nothing can touch our life, or interfere with our *standing*, yet, seeing that our *state* is imperfect, and our walk imperfect, our communion is liable to be interrupted, and hence it is that we need the present work of Christ for us.

Jesus lives at the right hand of God for us. His active intervention on our behalf never ceases for a single moment. He has passed through the heavens, in virtue of accomplished atonement, and there He ever carries on His perfect advocacy for us before our God. He is there as our subsisting righteousness, to maintain us ever in the divine integrity of the position and relationship into which His atoning death has introduced us. Thus we read: "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. v. 10.) So also we read: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted in like manner without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14-16.) Again: "But this Man, because He continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 24, 25.) "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are

the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. ix. 24.)

Then, in the First Epistle of John, we have the same great subject presented under a somewhat different aspect: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any one sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1 John ii. 1,2.)

How precious is all this to the true-hearted Christian who is ever conscious, deeply and painfully conscious, of his weakness, need, infirmity and failure! How, we may lawfully inquire, is it possible for any one, with his eye resting on such passages as those we have just quoted, to say nothing of his own self-consciousness, the sense of his own imperfect state and walk, to call in question the Christian's need of the unceasing ministry of Christ on his behalf? Is it not marvellous that any reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews, any observer of the state and walk of the most advanced believer, should be found denying the application of Christ's priesthood and advocacy to Christians now?

For whom, let us ask, is Christ now living and acting at the right hand of God? Is it for the world?

Clearly not, for He says: "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine." (John xvii. 9.)

And who are these? Are they the Jewish remnant?

Nay; that remnant is yet to appear on the scene.

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Who are they, then?

Believers, children of God, Christians, who are now passing through this sinful world, liable to fail, and to contract defilement every step of the way. These are the subjects of Christ's priestly ministry. He died to make them clean. He lives to keep them clean. By His death He expiated our guilt, and by His life He cleanses us, through the action of the Word by the power of the Holy Ghost. "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." (1 John v. 6.) We have expiation and cleansing through a crucified Saviour. The double stream emanated from the pierced side of Christ, dead for us. All praise to His name!

We have all in virtue of the precious death of Christ. Is it a question of our guilt? It is cancelled by the blood of atonement. Is it a question of our daily shortcomings? We have an Advocate with the Father, a great High Priest with God. "If any man sin." He does not say, "If any man repent." No doubt there is, and must be, repentance and self-judgment. But how are they produced? Whence do they proceed? Here it is: "We have an Advocate with the Father." It is His all-prevailing intercession that procures for the sinning one the grace of repentance, self-judgment, and confession.

It is of the very utmost importance for the Christian reader to be thoroughly clear as to this great cardinal truth of the advocacy or priesthood of Christ. We sometimes erroneously think that when we fail in our walk something has to be done on our part to set matters straight between our souls and God. We forget that, before we are

even conscious of the failure, before our conscience becomes really cognizant of the fact, our blessed Advocate has been to the Father about it; and it is to His intercession we are indebted for the grace of repentance, confession and restoration. "If any man sin, we have"—what? The blood to return to? No; mark carefully what the Holy Ghost declares: "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Why does He say, "the righteous"? Why not the *gracious*, the *merciful*, the *sympathising*? Is He not all this?

Most surely; but not any one of these attributes would be in place here, inasmuch as the blessed apostle is putting before us the consolatory truth that, in all our errors, our sins, and our failures, we have a "righteous" representative ever before the righteous God, the Holy Father, so that our affairs can never fall through. "He *ever* liveth to make intercession for us"; and because He *ever* liveth, "He is able to save *to the uttermost*," right through to the very end, "them that come unto God by Him."

What solid comfort is here for the people of God! And how needful for our souls to be established in the knowledge and sense of it!

Some there are who have an imperfect knowledge of the true *standing* of a Christian, because they do not see what Christ has done for them in the past. Others, on the contrary, have such an entirely one-sided view of the *state* of the Christian, that they do not see our need of what Christ is doing for us now.

Both must be corrected. The former are ignorant of the extent and value of the *atonement* of Christ; the latter are ignorant of the place and

application of the advocacy of Christ. Such is the perfection of our *standing*, that the apostle can say, "As He is, so are we in this world." (1 John v. 17.)

If this were all, we should certainly have no need of priesthood or advocacy. But such is our *state* that the apostle has to say, "If any man sin." This proves our continual need of the Advocate.

And, blessed be God, we have Him continually; we have Him *ever living for us*. He lives and serves on high. He is our subsisting righteousness before our God. He lives to keep us always *right* in heaven, and to set us *right* when we go wrong upon earth. He is the divine and indissoluble link between our souls and God.

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

III.

IN verses 15, 16, 17, we have a larger word, putting the young men at the business of their calling. How the Epistle teems with moral glories! Here is the world to fight, and him also in whom the world lies. Framed by Satan's lie, the world lies in him, and is nourished by him. On the forbidden tree grew "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Eve took it, and these lusts have impregnated her race! By that fruit the world to this day is animated. It "lieth in the wicked one." *It is the warmth of the wicked one that nourishes the world.* "The world passeth away." To be sure

it does! "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." (Gen. ii. 17.) Death, decay, and misery all lie in the track of sin.

Why will the kingdom be everlasting when Jesus takes it? Because of righteousness. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee." "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." (Heb. i. 8, 9.) Because righteousness and abiding are linked together; wasting and sin! Nothing that is essentially righteous is ever lost; it is in its very nature enduring. Suppose that the Spirit enlightens your soul with a ray of Christ's glory; though you should lose it for a time, it is eternal. No fragment of the mind of Christ is ever lost. You may be happier to-day than to-morrow; but though the joy may pass away from you, it is not annihilated. And oh! what a place will heaven be, where all the fragments shall be added together!

"Little children, it is the last time." (v. 18.) Paul, Peter, and John all speak of the "last time" as an *evil* time. Cast down the imagination that this world will become better. Whenever the Spirit looks at "the last time," He marks it with iniquity, awful iniquity. Peter marks it with scorning; John as the age of antichrists.

Now, do not let that go. They promise you improvement here, but no such thing is coming; judgment must close the scene; there is no grace in the Apocalypse! It is a scene of judgment, clearing the kingdom of all who offend and work iniquity. And whereas at present the world makes an "Exhibition" of itself (a well-chosen word!) shall I go to see it? Could I look on a man decking himself to go forth to execution? The world

makes its "International" Exhibitions of what it can do, on its road to judgment! Am I to make my boast in a world lying under sentence of judgment?

Now, suppose we were living in the days of Cain and Seth; if I were of the family of Seth, I could go to the town of Enoch and buy a spade to till my little fields; but could I go and enrol myself among the citizens? I can make use of things in this world, and thank God, too, for them; but while I am *in* this world, I am not *of* it. Many very dear people do not see this; but if one has once got into the light, how can one act in concert with these things! *I cannot do it!* The world is on the road to ruin, decking itself for the execution. It is a suited warning in this last time, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

"They went out from us, but they were not of us." (v. 19.) It is a poor thing to have resort to ecclesiastical excommunication! Shall I say "a poor thing" in the face of the fifth of First Corinthians? Yes, assuredly it is a poor thing. The railer was to be put away from amongst them, no doubt; but when I see the blessed Lord Jesus at such things, I do not see Him using discipline; but so deepening the atmosphere about Him that the spirit of a Judas *could not stand it!* He is not excommunicated; he is forced out!

John looks on the Church of God as so conducted that the railer has not to be excommunicated, but is forced out by the atmosphere around. Those who would touch the person of Christ cannot stand it; the complex person of Christ, as He came, God and Man. I confess that He came *in the flesh*; otherwise I have no Redeemer. I

am equally certain that He is "the Son of the living God." You and I should retain that so strongly that those who are of a contrary part should be ashamed, forced out. Do you do this? Did you ever know an instance of a sinner sporting his sin in the presence of Christ? Sorrows may be brought to Jesus. What atmosphere so suitable, so soothing to sorrow? None so reproving to *sin*! Yes, Lord Jesus, Thy presence invited a Magdalene, but repelled her sin! The consequences of our sins we bring to Jesus, but can our sins disport themselves under His eye? Never!

When Judas sold his Master, no ecclesiastical censure was necessary; it was *moral* censure, moral excommunication! Jesus so deepened the atmosphere around Him that Judas was forced out. And here, in John, the Spirit does the same. Nothing so touches the border of heaven, beloved, nothing so near heaven, as that you so behave yourself that contrary minds cannot stand it.

How we should bless the Lord that He ever wrote such things for our learning. These personal addresses! My soul blesses Him for them; and may He apply them, and give us such confidence in each other that we may join together in celebrating His glories in such a manner that the contrary part may be ashamed!

The characteristics of John's Epistles, as we have before remarked, differ from those of Paul.

In Paul's writings we have the subject of righteousness; in those of John we have moral deliverance, new life in Christ. We have not Churches addressed, as Galatia, Colosse, and Ephesus; but individuals in various circum-

stances, as "the Elect Lady," "Gaius," etc.

And is it not a great comfort to enter into the thought that God has a personal interest and delight in us? We do not become lost in "the great congregation," though we have our proper place in that also. But the joy is that my God has delight in dealing personally with me, my own self; and this thought is established especially in John's writings.

You will remember our dwelling on the characteristics of John, when we reached verse 19 of chapter ii. As in the Gospel, the Lord Jesus had not to excommunicate Judas, but he was forced out by the weight of His presence; so here the House of God is called to intensify her atmosphere in such a way that those of contrary minds could not stand it; and this is a far higher kind of discipline.

We must give heed and listen to both Paul and John; but there is a very marked difference between them. Could the sinner sport before Christ? He could come and welcome, with his sorrow for sin, but never with its defilements. So, beloved, if the House of God were in her true position, we should see this nineteenth verse in power amongst us. It may be that we do not constitute the House of God; but still, when we do meet together, we should breathe an atmosphere so filled with the glories of Christ that an opposer could not endure it.

In verse 20 a new characteristic is displayed, and this shows us more of the varied glories of the Spirit. When Paul speaks of the Holy Ghost he calls Him a Seal, an Earnest. John speaks of Him as an Unction. Paul shows the Holy Ghost given me as a seal of my present faith and con-

dition, and as an earnest of future glory. Most beautiful to find the Spirit come to verify what I am, and to ensure what I shall be! Yes, more than that, He comes *to make* me what I am.

In John we have the Holy Ghost as the unction, which forms the soul anew; I am made a new creature! John does not speak of the Holy Ghost as a pledge of the future, but as making me what I am; in His own energy and power forming me a new creature.

There are varied characteristics of the Spirit, just as we see in Christ the varied glories of David, Solomon, and of the Son of the Father. In Christ we see a constellation of glories, and we must neither confound nor separate them. And when we see the Holy Ghost as Earnest, Seal, and Unction, each one speaks of Him as divine.

John is much in company with the early part of Genesis. He does not look at the dispensations, but speaks of the truth, which the Holy Ghost uses; truth which forms you, as opposed to Satan's lie, the lie of the third of Genesis; truth which was brought to you by "that eternal life which was with the Father." (i. 2.) We are begotten by the word of truth, in combination with the Spirit of truth. (John iii. 5; Jas. i. 18.) When God visits us by the Holy Ghost the seed of God is sown, making us new creatures. God has then a new object in the soul, and He does look at it. It is *not the flesh*, but *what is of the Spirit* which is His object; and He does look at it with delight, and deals with it, to cultivate and enlarge it here, and to glorify it hereafter.

Not that you do not know these things already. He speaks because you do know them, and because you know that there is no alliance between

truth and lies. (v. 21.) He then goes on to show that the spirit of Antichrist is here. (v. 22.)

Beloved, I would ask you what it was that was done by the lie of the serpent? Did it not rob Adam of Eden, of Eve, of happiness, and of life? Did it *merely* rob him of these things?

No. It separated him from God. Satan's lie could not have depraved Adam without separating him from God. It did indeed rob him of all these things; but it also robbed him of God!

By *faith* God is restored to you! It is not only that you have a new nature, but faith sends you back all the way to God. You obtain what Adam never lost; you receive blessing far greater than his; you get Jesus as the Christ; the Father and the Son. Truth recovers you from the effects of the lie of the serpent, and gives you back your God.

Adam lost the Lord God in the garden, and in His creation glory. He ought to have walked uprightly; but he lost Him. Now you have regained Him; and that is deeper, richer glory than ever Adam had in Eden. You have found that the living God can become Jesus of Nazareth. You have seen divine glory displayed in the Father and Son; and you have an unction from the Holy One.

Well may we stand before such a gospel and say (as one did), "It is the greatest wonder outside God Himself!"

The hosts of angels who kept their first estate; the creation of the earth and heavens; take what you please, there is nothing like the cross of Christ. There is nothing to match with the Incarnation leading to the Crucifixion. Yes, beloved, in one blessed Person He travelled along the road;

in that same Person He suffered, rose, and ascended up to the right hand of God.

Adam did not know this.

What theatre was there whereon such grace might be displayed? It is your sin that has formed the platform for displaying the full glory of God. Dark background, do you say? Yes, well, you surely say it, a background of apostasy; but a brilliant foreground, bright with the full glory of God. In this light you stand, and he who denies it is antichrist.

Now this is pressed upon you, that you should not take Adam's course, but let the word *abide in you*. (v. 24.) Do not let it slip. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was a simple word; but Adam let it slip; it did not abide in him. Do you abide in it? Go back to God, and abide in the mysterious glory of the Father and the Son! Oh! how He has undone the mischief! He has taken meat from the eater, and from the strong sweetness. How magnificently has *the truth* outdone the lie! The lie never deprived me of all I possess now; the truth has taken occasion by the lie to bring meat out of the eater. (Judg. xiv. 14.)

"Let that, therefore, abide with you which ye have heard from the beginning"; that is, from the beginning of the gospel. Had Adam ever such promises? No; he had not indeed. If Adam had walked uprightly, he would have lived a forfeitable, defilable life. The life you possess is neither the one nor the other, but a triumphant, victorious life! In returning you receive more than you had lost; a richer, better life altogether.

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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).

## Christian Calling and Responsibility.

THE calling and responsibility of the Christian are to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. xii. 2.) This is to be his one grand object as to the whole path of his service in this world.

But how, it may be asked, is this end to be gained?

The truest answer would be, Like-mindedness to Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." And again, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." The apostle Paul says positively, "We have the mind of Christ." And if we are to walk so as to please God, we must walk, even as Christ walked. And this, according to the apostle John, is what we *ought* to do. "He that saith he abideth in Him *ought* himself

also so to walk, even as He walked." (Philippians ii. 5 ; Hebrews x. 9 ; 1 Corinthians ii. 16 ; 1 John ii. 6.)

The measure of the soul's obedience to the will of God is Christ ; He must be the one object before the mind. But to prove that will *practically*, we must be whole-hearted for Him, and be strengthened by the power of His grace acting on the renewed mind. The Holy Spirit, who only can show us the mind of God, must be ungrieved. (Eph. iv. 30.) We must be continually on the watch against the inroads of the world, the spirit of the age, and gradually growing in grace and in the knowledge of the divine will in all things. (2 Pet. iii. 8.)

Christian devotedness is thus **complete in truth** ; the whole man is consecrated to the Lord, and laid upon His altar. The body is yielded up, the mind is transformed, and the will of God discerned ; the man as a whole is devoted to God. Elsewhere the apostle prays for the complete *sanctification* of the entire man, which prayer we must just glance at in passing : " And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23.)

In this remarkable passage it is the expressed will of God that those who have been saved through grace, and brought into relationship with Himself, should be entirely consecrated to Him. This, surely, is devotedness without limit. It is the will of our God that the Christian, in every part of his being, should be wholly sanctified, or consecrated, to Himself as " the very God of peace." What grace, what love, what goodness !

## CHRISTIAN CALLING AND RESPONSIBILITY. 51

As water rises to its level, so God would have us, in every thought of our minds, in every part of our being, rise to Himself as our proper object, resource, and rest.

In Holy Scripture the *soul* is usually spoken of as the *individual*; as, "The souls that came with Jacob into Egypt." (Gen. xlv. 26.) The *body* is the instrument of the soul's expression and action; and the *spirit*, of its capacity and power. John the Baptist came in "the spirit and power of Elias," not in the *soul* of Elias. (Luke i. 17.)

Such is man in all the parts of his being; and the apostle prays that each part may "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Observe, he does not say, Unto the day of death, but "Unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This may show what an important place the coming of the Lord had in the mind of the apostle, or rather in the mind of the Holy Spirit; and what an important place it ought to have in the minds of all Christians. It is an essential, or at least a most influential, part of Christian life. Its place in this passage is perfectly beautiful. The believer, who is now but in measure sanctified, shall be wholly then, and in every part of his being: "spirit and soul and body." What a wonderful thought this gives us of what we may now call "poor humanity"! Then it will be perfected in each part; ennobled by grace; conformed to the glorious image of Christ Himself, who is the Head and Source of this new life in the glory. (1 Cor. xv. 49.)

Think of a resurrection body, characterised by four things, namely, "incorruption," "glory,"

“power,” “spiritual.” (1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.) This is the noble vessel by which the saint in glory will express himself. The soul, the proper seat of the affections, purified and all its capacities enlarged, what love will it take in and give out ! The mind, elevated and dignified by union with Christ, dwelling above the myriad hosts of shining ones who have never sinned, in intelligent relationship with God, meditating on His glory ; what must be the noble workings of that mind when wholly moved, guided, and sustained by the Holy Spirit ! This is the sure and happy portion of all who believe in Jesus now. Blessed privilege, precious opportunity ! There is no time like the present. Let Him have thy heart now, dear reader ; thy whole heart, and for ever.

O happy Christian, thou mayest well give up the tinselled vanities of time for the unfading glories of eternity ! But even now thou knowest thy place in the glory. Christ, in His Person, and in His present position in the presence of God, is the expression of thy place there. Every believer has his place before God in Christ, and in the righteousness of God, which He accomplished in Christ, having glorified Himself in that obedient, blessed One. And now God would have all who are brought into this relationship with Himself, to have no object before their minds but Christ in the glory, so that we may do His will, and “be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. i. 30, 31.)

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## Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

### IV.

**J**UST suppose Adam to have obeyed, what what would have been his term of life? As long as his obedience. He obeys to-day; well, he lives for to-day. He fails to-morrow, and he dies to-morrow! But you have got eternal life! As Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might *have it more abundantly.*" (John x. 10.)

John is not an argumentative writer. He does not give long arguments on any given subject. You might take it up, every verse, and study it apart. Not but there is fine moral connection; but you might pause at every verse. In Romans, Paul gives you arguments on righteousness; and in Hebrews on the priesthood, and you have the means of seeing your title without a cloud; but here it is the thoughtful soul, pausing over every step. (v. 25.)

"These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." (v. 26.) The serpent is as ready to seduce as ever. He would seduce you from Christ, and from the unction of the Holy One. You are as much in company with seducers now as in old days; but then, beloved, you have the anointing! Adam had it not. The seductions are very subtle, but you have full security.

Paul helped the Church at Corinth to look at its security. John goes to the *individual saint*, and helps him to see his own security. Paul says, I betrothed you as a fair virgin to Christ; beware! *I would fain present you chaste.* (2 Cor.

xi. 2.) This is ministerial guardianship. With John it is anointive guardianship. The Spirit brings out of the treasures "things new and old." In all, we see the exquisite multiformity of the mind of Christ.

"And ye need not that any man teach you." (v. 27.) Are you conscious of this glorious personality? We should abide in our God, the living God, from whom Adam fell. We are not merely recovered from Adam's depravity, but also from his alienation.

Wonderful secrets these! And yet this is not a favourite writing. Ah! the plummet sinks too deep for our souls. We would rather have Romans, or to run through other books; but oh! *to cherish those things that shut us up to God!* There the anointing secures us, in the very face of all seducers. Paul warns as an ecclesiastic; but John tells you *yourself* to let these secrets have their tale in your own souls.

We shall leave the twenty-ninth verse as an introduction to the third chapter; and now look at the depravity of the old nature by the light of the new. It is *not* that the *bad Adam nature becomes better*; no, *that* is left to *perish*; but we make a perfect escape out of it by receiving from Christ a *new nature, which is actually undefilable!*

And these are the provisions that grace makes ours.

We have before observed that one leading, blessed thought in the Epistle of John is this, that the breach made by Adam's fall is more than repaired in Christ. We have not here our judicial restoration, but our moral restoration. Paul gives us the judicial restoration, but John the moral.

In Paul's writings we have much about right-

## CHRIST OUR DELIVERER, LIFE AND OBJECT. 55

eousness and a little about life ; in John's we have life all through, and he shows our present condition to be far beyond that which Adam lost. Adam had God as Creator, the Framers of the world and of Eden ; and that was a very blessed thing. It was a blessed condition to be able to stand naked [without shame] in the presence of God. (Gen. ii. 25.) But you have your God as Redeemer, a far richer way than Adam knew Him. You have Him as Redeemer, and as Father, Son and Spirit. You have the relationship of a child, far beyond that of Adam in innocence.

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## Christ Our Deliverer, Life and Object.

**I**N the early chapters of the Gospel of John something of the Jews is brought forward, just to show out the blessing God was bringing in in Christ, in contrast with all that had gone before.

In chapter v. it is the Pool of Bethesda, connected with angelic ministry. Though the people were captive, and the ark still gone, God had preserved a remnant to present Christ to them. He kept them till they had rejected His Son ; and there were the remains of blessing still with them. He was still the Lord that healed them, and angelic ministry was still there.

A man was there at the pool, but the character of his sickness was such that it had taken away his strength, so that the sickness from which he

wanted healing had taken away the power to use the means of being healed. It was not a question of being willing; he was willing enough; but this disease had taken away the power of using the remedy.

The great thing we have to learn is, that "when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. v. 6.) We are slow to learn this, that we have no strength. The first man you meet in the street will own that he is a sinner; but if you tell him there is no strength in the flesh, he will think you are going to condemn him to be a sinner all his life.

I do not know a more precious word in the spirit and character of it than this portion. The poor man had been ill thirty-eight years.

The Lord asks, "*Wilt thou be made whole?*"

He had the will, but explains he had no strength.

Christ *brings* the strength with Him. This is what is so distinctly and definitely brought out in contrast with the law.

It was the Sabbath Day. The Jews draw attention to the fact, and the Lord takes up the blessed character He had as *Son*, and says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (v. 17.)

How can God rest where sin is, where misery is? He cannot have His rest in a world like this. Christ had come to *work*. But what makes it so blessed, beloved friends, is this truth: it was not man's work and man's strength; the Father and the Son are the workers in our salvation.

God might have cut off Adam and Eve, and there would have been an end of them in righteousness; but His nature would not let Him do

## CHRIST OUR DELIVERER, LIFE AND OBJECT. 57

that. He sets about to *work*. We see the Father and the Son working in grace. The Son had come to *work*.

Instead of cutting off the sinners, or leaving them in their wretchedness, God had made Himself a worker in His grace, and the whole thing was changed. The law required man to work, just as the Pool of Bethesda required a man to be quick enough to get himself into it. But in the gospel it is God who works. "My Father worketh." What an answer to their wretched malice, in accusing Him of breaking the Sabbath! The Father and the Son were working in grace to save man, because God had no rest when man was in misery and sin.

But though a vivid picture of the principle of grace, the Lord in teaching goes beyond this, and shows it is really life-giving.

They charge Him then with saying He was equal with God; which He did say, because He was one with Him; but He never puts Himself out of the place of servant, which place He had taken. He unfolds to them His Father; the Son would do nothing by Himself; He was a divine Person, but He had taken the place of servant, and He had one object in everything.

In verses 21-22 He goes into the work of the Father and the Son in two distinct things.

There are two great ways in which the glory of the Son is displayed. The Father quickens, and the Son quickens whom He will; and now mark: we are dead in sin, and the Father comes and quickens, the Son, too.

But it is not so when it comes to *judgment*. The Father has not been incarnate here, *spit* upon and trampled on. The Father judges no

man, and He has secured in this way that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, by committing all judgment to Him. (v. 22.) They have blessed fellowship in quickening souls, but, having come down as Son of man, having been outraged and insulted by everything man could do when he got the chance, all judgment is committed to the Son. Every knee shall bow, things in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth; no matter how wicked or how infidel and rebellious, he will have to bow to Christ just the same as any saint, though in a very different way. (Phil. ii. 10.)

Thus we get the Father and the Son both giving life; a divine work and power exercised in our favour; and then we get judgment, the way of securing honour for the Son; the Father judges no man, but puts it all into His hands.

And now comes this solemn question, beloved friends: In which way have *I* to do with the Son? In quickening or in judgment? as the blessed One who loved me, and gave Himself for me, washing me in His blood, or as the One who is executing judgment because I would not own Him?

To this God gives an answer in His own blessed way: "He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." (v. 24.) Those that believe do not come into judgment, do not come into Christ's second way of dealing. The thing is *done*. Christ has wrought in His blessed quickening grace, and the judgment is *over*. We are not called in question, because the place, the life, the condition we have, are the effect of the

## CHRIST OUR DELIVERER, LIFE AND OBJECT. 59

work of the Father and the Son; and He will not call *that* in question.

Whenever a person has heard His word, believed Him that sent Him, *that* is eternal life; and he has *got* it. If the Shepherd's voice has been heard, I say, Yes, I know whose voice that is; it is the voice of the blessed Son of God. As He said to the poor woman at the well: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." (John iv. 10.) I know the Father sent Him that I might have life; not by my wishing, for it was when I was a sinner.

If I have heard His word, the voice of the blessed Son of God, I shall not come into the judgment. All will stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; everything will come out there, and so much the better. But there is no question of judgment for the believer, because Christ has borne the sins for which he would have had to be judged. The Person who is to be the Judge has first of all been the Saviour. When I come before the judgment-seat of Christ, I say, There is the Man who bore all my sins!

But more, we are glorified when we get there; "It is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." We are glorified and brought there *like Himself*. (1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.)

The one who believes has been quickened, does not come into judgment, and *is passed* from death unto life. (v. 24.) Not only that when he was living in sins he learned to hate them, and put them away, but he is brought into a new state

altogether : “ Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. vi. 11.)

And then He goes on to the display of still further power : “ All that are in the graves shall hear His voice.” (v. 25.) There is “ the resurrection of life ” ; the power that quickened the souls, now raising the bodies. He carries on and completes as to the body the work which He had begun in the soul.

People talk of fitting themselves for heaven. You never find such a thing in Scripture. The Father “ *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ” (Col. i. 12), and therefore the thief, when he died upon the cross, confessing Christ to be the Lord (a most glorious confession of faith, for He was rejected and forsaken of all) goes straight into paradise ; and I suppose he was quite fit to go there. I am not saying a word against *growth* ; there are abundant scriptures for that ; but you will not find one of them in connection with being fit for heaven.

“ The resurrection of life ” is the full carrying out of this blessed work of the Father and the Son. The bodies of the saints are raised, and all is complete ; and then comes the resurrection of judgment. Of believers it is said that the Lord Jesus Christ “ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” (Phil. ii. 21.) But this is not the case with those who have been walking in evil : they are raised for judgment.

I do not know anything that has done more mischief than the thought of a “ general ” resurrection, because it throws back the question of the justification of the Christian to a day of judg-



## CHRIST OUR DELIVERER, LIFE AND OBJECT. 61

ment that has not yet come. There is no such thought in Scripture. "Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming. (1 Cor. xv. 23.) "The dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. iv. 16.)

The resurrection of the saints, as explained in 1 Cor. xv., is the fruit of the quickening power of the Lord Jesus applied to the bodies of His saints. It is "the resurrection of life"; we are raised in glory. Scripture does not throw us back into uncertainty to be judged. And why? Because the Lord is my righteousness. God's righteousness is shown in glorifying me. Whoever is judged for his works is infallibly condemned. (Rev. xx. 12.) But if I have no righteousness for God, He has righteousness for me; and how can that be a thing to be called in question afterwards?

But if I am in Christ, and so accepted, He is in me. And here is our responsibility. And this I press: If we are alive to God, let us see this life come out. The only thing we have to do here is to live Christ. Responsibility flows from the place I am in. I am to glorify Christ in the place that I am in as "alive to God" in Christ.

And then He takes up their responsibility in rejecting Him as come in grace. He had shown the operation of sovereign grace in quickening, so He shows how they had neglected every testimony: that of His Father, of His own works, of John the Baptist, and of their own Scriptures. In the folly of their hearts they rejected Jesus, rejected or neglected Him; and they have to be judged.

We have got the quickening power of the Father and the Son, that exercised in giving

divine life, and in consequence no mixing up of "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of judgment."

But there is another thing that is important for our peace, that is, the knowing it *now*. "He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life." (v. 24.) The Spirit gives power to the quickening word.

It is a blessed thing to find we can know this now. If I have heard Christ's word, and believed the Father, who in unspeakable grace sent the Son to be the Saviour, I *have* everlasting life; and I recognise not only that I was guilty through my sins, but *dead*; and *when* dead, *quicken*ed, and have passed from that state, out of it, into life; and if Christ come soon enough I may not have to die at all. (1 Thess. iv. 15.)

How little, beloved friends, have we realised the completeness of the work Christ has done! We do not believe that He has so completely overcome the power of death that we need not die at all. We may "all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.)

We have to learn ourselves and God's faithful patience and grace, and God knows how long to leave us to learn this; but we have *got life* in the Son. An unconverted man has not got life at all; he is dead in his sins, though that is not the first thing that reaches his conscience, but his *guilt*. But when we come to learn our state, it is important we should know what we *are*. In the flesh the tree is bad; but I have got life in Christ, and that is another thing.

Do not confound things, and think of a future judgment which is going to settle everything. It

## CHRIST OUR DELIVERER, LIFE AND OBJECT. 63

will settle nothing : it will manifest and *execute*, but it settles nothing. " He that believeth not is condemned *already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John iii. 18.) And if he die in that state he dies in his sins.

Do you believe there is no good in you at all? It is a most bitter thing to say. No one denies there are amiable qualities, but you find them in animals too. Who would be morally in a better state before God : a person with a shocking bad temper, who was looking to God earnestly every day to control it, or one with a good temper, who was pleased with himself?

God tells us we are dead. It is hard to learn, for our experience contradicts it. We are to " mortify our members " ; and I have got power and duty too, for Christ has died. There comes this every-day conflict ; but I have both the title and duty, and power to say, I am not a debtor to the flesh. " God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. viii. 3.) It is all settled. Christ died ; then I am dead, and I have got Christ for my life ; and having Him for my life, I have Him after He has put away all my sins.

Now, do you honestly say, I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, *dwelleth no good thing*? (Rom. vii. 18.) Do you believe that of yourselves? You will never get full liberty till you do ; and you will never know what it is to be settled and steady in your soul till you have learned it ; for then you get not only forgiveness and justification, but *deliverance*. (Rom. vii. 24, 25.)

It is a very different thing to contend with the

flesh when it has got the upper hand, and when you have.

Do you say : Yes, I am a poor nothing, but I have passed from death unto life ; I shall not come unto judgment ? I have heard His word, I know that the Father, in unspeakable, unutterable love, has sent the Son, and I have heard Him, and got everlasting life. And oh ! see, beloved friends, the infinite blessedness of it, to be walking with God in the full sense of His unclouded favour resting upon us as it did upon Christ !

And we want to know more, first, of the place by faith, and then of the power where God has set us through this astonishing work of the Lord Jesus Christ ; that, while He has put away all the sins the flesh produces, He has given us eternal life ; and here we are called to manifest the life of Christ in everything, as dead to sin, crucified with Him, and always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. (2 Cor. iv. 10.) Not only to avoid open sins, but to be the epistles of Christ, that men should read Christ in us, as they did the law in the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone. (2 Cor. iii. 3.) We shall soon find what we are, poor feeble creatures ; but that with Christ we can do all things. We need diligence in seeking His grace, but with Him there is positive strength to overcome. (2 Cor. xii. 9 ; Phil. iv. 13.)

The Lord give us simplicity of heart to see the fulness of His grace, and then to live to Christ here through all the circumstances of life ; the only object before us, the only motive in the thousand things we have to do, CHRIST.

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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 Christian's Position in relation to Prophecy.

**A**N important fact for the reader to seize is this, that the Church forms no part of the ways of God with Israel and the earth. The Church does not belong to *time*, but to *eternity*. She is not *earthly*, but *heavenly*. She is called into existence during an unnoticed interval, break, or parenthesis, consequent upon the cutting off of the Messiah. (Daniel ix. 26.)

To speak after the manner of men, if Israel had received the Messiah, then the seventy weeks of Daniel, or four hundred and ninety years, would have been fulfilled. (Daniel ix. 24.) But Israel rejected their King, and God has retired to His place until they acknowledge their iniquity. He has suspended His public dealings with Israel and the earth, though most surely still controlling all

things by His providence, and keeping His eye upon the seed of Abraham, ever beloved for the fathers' sake. (Rom. xi. 28.)

Meanwhile He is calling out, from Jews and Gentiles, that body called "the Church," to be the companion of His Son in heavenly glory; to be thoroughly identified with Him in His present rejection from this earth, and to wait in holy patience for His glorious advent. (1 Thess i. 10.)

All this marks off the Christian's position in the most definite manner possible. His portion and his prospects are thus defined with equal clearness. It is vain to look into the prophetic pages of the Old Testament in order to find the Church's position, her calling, or her hope. **THEY ARE NOT THERE.**

It is entirely out of place for the Christian to be occupied with dates and historic events, as though he were in anywise involved therein. No doubt all these things have their proper place, their value, and their interest, as connected with God's dealings with Israel and with the earth. But the Christian must never lose sight of the fact that he belongs to heaven; that he is inseparably linked with an earth-rejected, heaven-accepted Christ; that his life is hid with Christ in God; that it is his holy privilege to be looking out, daily and hourly, for the coming of his Lord. (Col. iii. 1-4; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.)

There is nothing to hinder the realisation of that blissful hope at any moment. There is but the one thing that causes the delay, and that is, "the long-suffering of our Lord," "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. iii. 9, 15.) Precious words these for a lost and guilty world! The salvation

is "*ready* to be revealed"; and God is "*ready* to judge." (1 Pet. i. 5; iv. 5.) There is nothing now to wait for but the gathering in of the last elect one, and then (oh! most blessed thought) our own blessed and loving Saviour will come, and receive us to Himself, to be with Him where He is, and to go no more out for ever. (John xiv. 3; Rev. iii. 12.)

When the Church has thus gone to be with her Lord in the heavenly home, God will resume His public actings with Israel. They will be brought into great tribulation. (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.) But at the close of a period of unexampled pressure and trial, their long-rejected Messiah will appear for their relief and deliverance. (Matt. xxiv. 29-31.) He will come forth as the rider on the white horse, accompanied by the heavenly saints. He will execute summary judgment upon His enemies, and take to Himself His great power, and reign. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Satan will be bound for "a thousand years"; and the whole universe shall repose beneath the blissful and benignant rule of the Prince of peace. (Rev. xix. ; xi. 15; Ps. lxx.)

Finally, at the close of the thousand years, Satan will be loosed, and permitted to make one more desperate, antagonistic effort, an effort issuing in his complete defeat, and consignment to the lake of fire, there to be tormented, with the beast and the false prophet, through the everlasting ages. (Rev. xx.)

Then will follow the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead, and their consignment to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Tremendous and appalling thought! No heart can con-

ceive, no tongue can tell, the horrors of that "lake of fire." (Rev. xx.)

But hardly a moment is there to dwell upon the dark and awful picture, for the unutterable glories of the new heavens and the new earth burst at once upon the vision of the soul; the holy city is seen descending from heaven, and these seraphic sounds fall on the ear: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' (Rev. xxi.)

Oh! beloved Christian reader, what scenes are before us! What grand realities! What brilliant moral glories! May we live in the light and power of these things! May we cherish "that blessed hope" of seeing the One who loved us, and gave Himself for us, who would not enjoy His glory alone, but endured the wrath of God in order that He might link us with Himself, and share with us all His joy and glory for ever. Oh! to live for Christ, to wait for Him, and to "love His appearing"! (Titus ii. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 8.)

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And soon, the day of glory come,  
 Thy Bride shall reach her destined home.  
 And all Thy beauty see.  
 How great our joy to see Thee shine,  
 To hear Thee own us, Lord, as Thine,  
 And ever dwell with Thee!



## Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

### V.

THE third chapter of this epistle opens with sonship. Your sonship far exceeds that of angels. They are sons in virtue of creation, having never lost their first estate. You have a sonship by *adoption*; and now even your very nature is superior to that of Adam. Adam's nature was innocence; yours is righteousness. God cannot put you higher. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (v. 1.) Therefore the world does not know *you*, any more than it knows *Him*. It is an atheist world; yes, an atheist world that had its Maker in it, and yet knew Him not.

And here we might dwell a little on the fulness of Scripture. Matthew gives us the history of the unbelieving Jew rejecting his Messiah; John shows the atheist world, not knowing its Saviour. No; and it does not know you either. Oh! wonderful place of sympathy and connection with Christ!

"Now are we the sons of God." (v. 2.) Tell me, can you ever be *more* accepted, more *pardoned*, more received, than now? Glory will yet have more to do; but grace has done its business. Both grace and glory have taken you up. If you were sick, you would like to see a skilful physician. If you wanted anything made, you would put your material into the hands of a good workman. Grace and glory are your workmen, and I ask you, Could you be better off? You are

here told of these two wonderful workers. Grace has done her utmost; glory shall work by and by. We know that when Jesus shall appear, we shall be like Him; you will reflect Him. (v. 2.) As surely as the moon reflects the sun, so the Church will reflect Christ.

Was not Adam a son of God? Yes, he is so called. He lost this. Are we to receive it? Yes, with advantage! Creation sonship, or the *sonship of adoption*, which is best?

If my bad nature be not cured by the gospel, I have got a new nature. It is the eater bringing forth meat! And as to the lost sonship, I would not take it back now. I have got something better, a richer enjoyment, and a more prized sonship. It is wonderful to see the recovery rising above the mischief. Why?

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." (iii. 2.) The tale is not, could not be, half told. You shall soon be glorified by the Holy Ghost.

"The world knoweth us not." Why not? Why did Cain hate Abel? God loved him, and Cain could not stand that. Now John says, "The world hateth you." (v. 13.) It is not that your manners are peculiar, though they might well be. But what the world cannot understand is *acceptance*, the saint's confidence as a child, as an heir. This is what irritates the world. You are the sons of God. The world does not know it. You ought to let it be known. It would stir up much enmity. Let the heart be occupied with its high prerogative; let the lips utter it; and Cain will be provoked. Your habits ought to be peculiar. A living soul, invested with its high prerogative, satisfied that God has done all a child can wish, and the world knows him not!

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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The "Him" of verse three means Jesus: "And every one that hath this hope in HIM purifieth himself, even as HE is pure." (v. 3.) Nothing can be simpler. If you were expecting a friend, you would be busy getting the house ready to receive him. Both house and household must be made ready. This is common in human life, that your conditions should be answerable to your expectations. Can anything be simpler?

I ask then, both of you and myself, Have we our house in order, in position to meet Jesus? And by this I mean, Have we our heart and affections waiting on Him? This third verse is just getting the heart into condition answerable to its expectations. Does ambition? Does the love of gain? Does the gratification of lusts and vanities? Are these things answerable to the hope of Christ's appearing? Would you not be ashamed to have your house dirty when your friend arrived? Jesus Christ only asks us to do for Him what we always do for our equals. Oh! the intimacy of Christianity! It is not dogmatism. If you regard Christianity as dogmatism (let me say it), you have mistaken the *genus* of it. Jesus comes, and puts Himself before you, and merely requires of you that you treat Him as you treat one another.

The apostle now speaks of the two fountains which are the spring of all moral being (v. 4.) At first there was but one fountain, and that the lie of the serpent defiled. It became the one common parent (morally) of the whole human family. All are children of wrath, lying in the wicked one. (Eph. ii. 3; 1 John v. 19.) Now the Son of God has come to take the spoils from the wicked one; and from one or the other source

every moral existence is derived. "Sin is lawlessness." (v. 4.) "In Him is no sin." (v. 5.)

You may say, "I know that, without John's telling it me."

True; but there is deep meaning in John's giving the truth in this connection. It means that if you draw your life from Jesus, you draw, from an undefilable source, a life which is undefilable. If you draw your life from Satan, you draw from that which is *all* unclean. If you are the creature of the lie, morally born of the liar, you have a life that *cannot* be improved; it is utterly corrupt. If you are born of *the truth*, you have a life that *cannot be defiled*.

These are the two fountains of moral being; and they *never* co-mingle. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" (Jas. iii. 11.) No; the one is undefilable; the other cannot be cleansed. You all know that no river ever can ascend higher than its source. So the creature of lies is under pollution; but he that is born of the Spirit cannot be defiled.

And now may we not truly say that by the loss of innocence we are gainers? Christ is more than "the Repairer of the breach." (Isa. lviii. 12.) We can stand before Satan, and say, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." (Judg. xiv. 14.) Ah! it is a divine parable; and how beautifully this is exhibited here. If you have lost the life that was forfeitable, you have received the life that is eternal. You have lost a defilable nature; but you have got an undefilable nature. Would

## Two Remarkable Prayers.

### 1. THE PRAYER IN EPHESIANS 1. 15-23.

**T**HIS prayer is attached to the name of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He is looked at as man; that in chapter iii. 14-21, to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He is looked at as Son.

The beginning of chapter i. gives us God's calling, that we should be "holy and without blame before Him in love," that we might receive "the adoption of sons."

After stating, in that chapter, His purpose concerning Christ Himself, that all things are to be gathered together in one in Him, the apostle goes on to speak of the inheritance of which the Holy Ghost is the earnest, and then to the prayer for them on this ground. At the very close of the chapter he adds our relationship to Christ Himself, "the Church, which is His body."

It is always well for us to remember that Christ has purified to Himself a peculiar people (a people of possession), and we cannot rise up to the counsels of God and mind of Christ unless we are brought into these intentions of God.

The most immediate and closest object of His thoughts is His saints. I necessarily take in all saints if I am in His thoughts. I cannot have "the mind of Christ" without taking in all of them. It is the very spirit of Christ Himself.

There are two parts in this prayer of the apostle. (Eph. i. 15-23.) The first is, that they might know the place itself; the second, that they should know the power that brought them there.

The very fulness of the blessing we have got is that we are blessed with Christ. As we were asso-

ciated with the first Adam in ruin, so we are associated with the Second Man in glory.

There is nothing He has that He does not bring us into. This is the character of perfect love. Christ gives "not as the world giveth." The world may give generously sometimes, but it has done with what it gives. Christ gives by introducing people into what He is enjoying Himself.

Take glory : " The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them."

Take joy : " That My joy might remain in you."

Take peace : " Peace I leave with you ; My peace I give unto you."

Take love : " Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

Having become man, and accomplished perfect redemption, He would not take the inheritance without His joint-heirs. He is the source and head of all the glory that is given.

" What is the hope of His calling." Not of *your* calling ; this would not do at all. Here it has the fullest and highest character. He takes the heart up to these thoughts and counsels of God. We are called to be before God " holy and without blame." We are called to be in Christ's place before God, before the Father, perfectly answering to His love. He does not pray that they may *have* it, but that they may *know* it.

As to His inheritance in the saints, if our minds took in the Jewish place compared with our own, this would be extremely simple. Whose land was Israel's? It was God's inheritance ; and those in whom He inherited it were Israel.

We Christians are not an inheritance, but we are heirs of God. We have nothing below what God would have in His mind here.

## TWO REMARKABLE PRAYERS.

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Observe, the prayer is, "That the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened." We must not think that we ought not to know these things. The New Testament carefully tells us that we have them laid open to us expressly. "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him": such was the state of the Jews; but it is not our state.

These things are not only given to us, but we are given to understand them; we are not in the condition of the Old Testament believers at all. In 1 Corinthians ii. we have the three steps: *revelation* by the Holy Ghost; *communication* of the word given by the Holy Ghost; and the *reception* of the word by the Holy Ghost. (vv. 10-16.)

Take the account of the heavenly city in the Book of Revelation: it means something. All those images are characteristic in Scripture. I quite admit they are only *figures*; but they convey *thoughts*.

The more we live in the mind of God, the more intelligent we are. The same things I see through a glass darkly, I shall see more clearly, but not differently. Thus, the "white stone" is a symbol full of power. We have common joys, but there is such a thing as the immediate approbation of Christ to the individual.

"Gold" is always the sign of divine righteousness in itself. In the laver of the Tabernacle the priests were to wash and be clean; but with the sea of glass like crystal I walk upon purity.

So "fire" is judgment; as "a sea of glass mingled with fire." It is perfect purity as the result of judgment.

"The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." Instead of walking through the dirt of this world, I am to walk on holiness and righteousness according to God.

In the Book of Revelation we do not go beyond the idea of God in government.

Now (Eph. i. 19-20) we come to the power that brings us into these things: "According to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." What an immense truth there is in connection with this! The Messiah was not merely the promised Son of David, but the One in whom all God's counsels would be accomplished. He went down below all things, and then goes up far above all heavens. This dead Man is raised above all principality and power. He had gone down into the place of death, and consequently in this Epistle men are looked at as dead in sins, not as living in them. (ii. 1.)

It is well to note here that to look at the sinner as alive in sins, or as dead in them, is the same state, but a different aspect of it. In the Epistle to the Romans man is seen alive in sins, and Christ meeting that state.

There is nothing said of justification in Ephesians; not a single stir of life there; we were dead in the sins, and Christ died for the sins. God comes in, and takes us all up together (looked at as in the mind and counsels of God). God quickens us together with Him. Christ comes down to this place of death, having cleansed our sins on the road; and God raises Him. Man is looked at consequently as united to Christ.

This you do not find in the other epistles.

The same power has wrought in every indi-



vidual who believes in Christ that wrought in Him. Christ had gone into death for us, entering into the whole thing in grace, and finding us where we were; and, having wrought the work that entitles Him to take us out of it, we are raised with Him, seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

This is your place, Christian. He does not ask you what you think about it! There is no person who has the Spirit of Christ but that is his place. We are waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body, but one must be either in Christ or out of Christ. There are never two places for the Christian.

All things are to be put under Christ's feet as man, for God "gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body." A short sentence; but the whole mystery is in it. It is a quotation from Psalm viii.: "All things are put under his feet." In Psalm ii. He is seen as Son of David, King of Zion, Son of God. Nathanael, in John i., refers to this psalm; and Jesus says to him, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man." He is rejected, and then comes out Psalm viii. Now He is crowned with glory and honour, but we do not see all things put under His feet yet. He is now sitting on the Father's throne. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." (Rev. iii. 21.) "Sit Thou at My right hand," says Jehovah, "until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

The day of grace is before that "until." There is our comfort and blessing, that He has finished the work for His friends. "By one offering He

hath perfected for ever them which are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) We stand therefore between the work which He perfected at His first coming, and His second coming. We are not, like the Jews, waiting to see that His offering is accepted, because the Holy Ghost is come out meanwhile, and seals those who believe in Christ. I already know the acceptance; I know that He is our forerunner. Then He deals with His enemies. When thus set over all things, the Son Himself will be subject to Him who put all things under Him; a most blessed truth for us. He will reign while He brings all into absolute order for God. When this has been done, He will take His place as man, and never give it up. He is the first-born among many brethren. Over everything He created, He is to be set as man; but a head without a body would not be complete. The supplement is wanting; the Church is His body.

No one ever mentions the Church but Paul. Others may speak of a local church; and Christ said, "On this rock I will build My Church"; but I am not speaking of this either. (Matt. xvi.) If the Church had been revealed before the cross, you must make every Jew who was in it break the law. The essence of the Church is that all are one, Jew and Gentile. (Eph. ii. 14.)

## 2. THE PRAYER IN EPHESIANS iii. 14-21.

The prayer in chapter iii. is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There the apostle does not ask that they may know all these thoughts and counsels of God, but that Christ may dwell in their hearts.

He is not now looking at them objectively, but at Christ in them. He desires that they should

have Christ actually, consciously, by faith dwelling in their hearts, settled in the perfectness of divine love, that they may be able to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height (he does not say of what) while putting Christ in the centre of all that glory. If I look at the breadth and length and depth and height, it is dazzling; but if I found my closest friend the centre of the royal court, I should be at home at once. Is it that I have lost anything by this, that it is the humble, lowly One who is dwelling in my heart? Not a bit.

Thus if in chapter i. we have exterior power bringing up Christ, or ourselves by grace, into a position of glory at God's right hand, in chapter iii. we find divine power in us as in the position, and we desired to be strengthened and filled accordingly, in order to realise what it and God himself is in the fulness of it.

It is not God dealing with man, but Christ's relation as Son, and dwelling in us by faith; He, the centre and divinely entitled Light of the fulness and display, dwelling in us to give competency to enter into all the scene. Rooted and grounded in love we are at the centre thus in its moral (or, rather, divine) springs, and so embrace all that partake of the divine nature; because it is the action of that nature.

Thus we look out into the wide extended scene of glory, whose limit none can tell. Yet still this is a display, not a source; a scene, not Himself. In love we are at the source of all. We know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. What I know it in has made it wholly and peculiarly mine, yes, mine as being nothing in it.

Christ is divine, infinite in nature; it is so

proved in the way it adapts itself to all my wants and weakness, known in adapting itself to them, yet known in itself. As Christ's love, it is for man; is manifested in man, and adapts itself to man; yet therein, as divine, it passes knowledge, and brings man, as spiritual (he can feel, think, and apprehend as man), into the enjoyment of the scene in which God is displayed, and to God Himself according to His own fulness; and this filled with love as in the centre of it consciously.

It is we, not brought into a scene by power, but filled up to the measure of the fulness of God, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. Thus love is the spring of power in us, so that we estimate the scene of that fulness, according to the title, character, and nature of God in it, He himself being the ultimate blessedness of which we are conscious.

What makes us familiar there is that that which is in us, and which is the central light of all, is One we know, who dwells in us by faith, the nearest and most confided in of all; yet the fulness of Deity is in Him. (Compare Revelation xxi. 23.)

God "is able to do exceeding abundantly according to the power that worketh in us." (v. 20.) This is what we are to look for now.

Has your heart got hold of this? There is a power that works in us, and according to it He can do exceeding abundantly above all we ask and think. How little faith there is in the power of God!

I believe everything [ecclesiastical] is in ruin and confusion; but there is no ruin or confusion in the power of Christ. I never can think of a power of evil that is not below His power.

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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).

Relationship with Christ in Resurrection.

(Read John xx.)

IT is remarkable what instruments God uses to display His grace towards man, and the different exercises of heart persons go through, which prepare them for the service on which they are to be sent. There is a loneliness which may even be occasioned by a man's own folly, in which he finds himself without a single thing to get comfort in, that he may prove that to be in the Lord which he would not know in any other way.

God cannot associate Himself with evil. There must be death upon nature altogether. The corn of wheat would have remained alone without death. Christ was alone as to Himself; comforters He had none. "I looked for some to take

pity, but none." "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Ps. lxxix. 20, 21.)

These are expressions of this loneliness. He was walking in undeviating devotedness with His Father all the way through; but there were none to enter into it, though speaking of His disciples He graciously says: "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations." Could He have said more if they had been faithful in sympathy all the time? Our poor hearts have to learn the way the Lord meets the soul that waits on Him. (Luke xxii. 28.)

We see in the case of Mary Magdalene here, and in the other Mary too, who broke the box of ointment on Him, there was something that made them *lonely*. What made Lazarus' sister Mary lonely? She had found something that took her clean out of the world. Martha was careful about the supper; but with her it was not the supper but *Himself*. His object was not to come for earthly refreshment, but to pour into His people's hearts the revelation of the Father.

Martha was not wrong in preparing the supper, but in trying to get Mary away from the Lord. If she had been right, she would have been glad to do it all herself. There was not the joy and delight in her heart that there ought to have been.

Mary had found one thing that isolated her heart in the most blessed way. Her affections were alive to all the evil that was coming (not as a prophetess, but her spirit was in the thing), and at the right moment she went and spent the ointment on Him.

He says of her, "She hath done it for My burial."

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In this Mary (the Magdalene) we get another thing. Seven devils had been cast out of her; that is to say, the expression of complete diabolical possession, indicating the extreme of wickedness. *That* isolates a person, who is separated from nature, as it were by the extent of wretchedness. When the spirit is touched, she is separated from the evil.

The effect of finding *Christ* in *such* circumstances is that He becomes everything to her. There is not the same intelligence in her as in the other Mary: we do not find *her*, as the Magdalene, at the tomb. She could not leave in the same way. When she lost Christ after the flesh, she had nothing. She was terribly broken to pieces by evil, and Christ was gone. There was something human connected with her affection; there was also culpable ignorance in what she did; but the Lord had compassion on her; and more, He manifested Himself first to her.

The disciples saw and believed. They perceived He was gone, but understood not the Scriptures. She had no home, and when she found not the body of Christ, what had she? The disciples were not isolated in the same way; they go away to their own homes. She, in her ignorance, but withal in her love, says, "I will come and take Him away."

This last is very precious. It is a great thing when Christ has such a place with us as to be everything. In one sense, this is the door by which all must pass through; at death if not before, nature must decay and vanish. What is more nothing than death? All here is gone. We may learn this spiritually, or by circumstances, or at the moment of death itself; but learn it we

must. We must find everything but Christ *nothing*.

Christ calls her by name. When He comes and calls His sheep by name, it is all right. She had now got Him back after death. Nature had, as it were, passed through death, as Isaac. Nature *had* mixed itself up with her affections; but now she has got beyond that: all is given up to God. The promises made to Abraham were all surrendered up by him when Isaac was to be taken.

Mary Magdalene thought she had Christ back when she had not. She thought of Him corporeally, but she must have Him in another way. It will be so with the remnant of Israel by and by. They will have Him corporeally then, but now He says, "Touch Me not." I am going to another place. I am taking your hopes or your promises in another way, and not in flesh. If He was to take it, it would be when the just shine in the kingdom of the Father.

He says, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, My God and your God." I am giving you something entirely new; not My presence yet; not power yet; but where He was going Himself, He would take us.

He does isolate us; He does pass us through different circumstances; but, whether gradually or suddenly, His object is to break down everything of nature, and this in grace to us. Here for the first time He says "My brethren." He never called them "brethren" *definitely* until now. He had been heard from the horns of the unicorns. (Psalm xxii.)

During His life He had declared the Father's name. Now He declares the love wherewith He is loved is that with which we are loved. He

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could not say that during His life. During His ministry He was making known the Father, walking with the Father, speaking to the Father. Now He takes them into the same relationship. Why? Because the redemption was accomplished.

Christ never addresses His Father as *God*, never less than as Father. During His life, as given in the Gospels, all His life through, it was always "Father." When on the cross it was "My God, My God" until all was finished, when He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

In making the atonement what was not against Him? There was one thing that could not be against any, and that was *love*; but there could be none as to the feeling and manifestation of it then. He was forsaken; and the more the love was known, the more terrible it was. He was dealt with according to the majesty of God, the truth of God, the holiness of God. All that God was was made good against Him. God was thus putting away sin, and Christ was glorifying God about the sin.

But now, being dead and risen, He comes up to put His disciples into the place of full blessing. The work is done and there is no sin left. Everything that God is is now brought out in blessing, and all the sin is put out of the way. He is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Rom. i.) He goes up to God, and takes us too. I am going to my God, and He is your God too. He is going into all that is blessed. I am not going to be present with you corporeally, so that you can "*touch*" me, but I am going to my God and your God, my Father and your

Father. That is the word to this poor, desolate woman. She was a fit messenger, by her very nothingness, to witness of Christ and His work and fulness.

"I go." And faith goes too, entering into that within the veil. It enters into all that which God is. Where we live is within the veil. (Heb. vi. 19.) Sense may come in, and hide God's presence, but the atonement has brought us into it, and into the very same relationship which Christ has as risen. We sometimes enjoy peace; we enjoy Scripture, a hymn, or a prayer, without realizing the presence of God; and then there is not the same power or the same exercise of heart in it. I can own the blessing, and rejoice in the blessing, without having my heart searched out; but if in these I have the sense of Him, my state is very different.

It is very important, not only to have a right thought, but to have it with Him. If you search your own heart, you will find that you may sing without realizing Jesus Himself. Then the heart is never probed, the evil is not detected, and the power of grace is not the same.

By the atonement sin is put out, and God is brought in. God exercises our hearts about good and evil by first giving us the good. There must be the possession of perfect good, and then there is holiness, and not merely the exercise of dread and fear. Our hearts must follow Him where He is gone. We cannot "touch" Him.

May the Lord give us to live a life in which He is everything!

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

VI.

WOULD you go back to Adam's state? Would you wish for a life that, when tested, was lost? You have a better life; you have regained God in a wonderful way; you have regained sonship in a wonderfully better way. Again, I say, it is not here judicial restoration. If you want the putting away of sins, Paul treats of it in Romans and Hebrews.

John makes it his business to show moral restoration, and that all that had been lost is regained with advantage. Everything is of a higher order than anything Adam enjoyed. Oh! beloved, there is a glory in Christianity that we have but slightly observed. Do we want anything besides this Book? Do we want to be told that the sun is shining? No. And if the glories of this Book do but disclose themselves, we need no more ask for witness of its divine origin than for witness that the sun shines.

We now have this new life in expression (*vv.* 7-9.) If Christ is the Head of our new life, it *is* and must be undefilable as far as it is active. It is impossible for it to sin. You can no more taint the new life than you can mend the old.

But do you expect to mend the old life? And do you expect to taint the new?

Let go such expectations! There is a middle wall of partition between these two lives, and they never can co-mingle.

You may say, "What am I to do with my complex person?"

You have both natures in you. One is the fallen creature; the other, the divine nature.

A person once said, "As the apostle has said, I pray God to sanctify you, spirit, and soul, and body."

"Then I must be a perfectible creature, for what more is there in me than spirit, and soul, and body." Yes, but there is more in you. There was a time when man was only that, but *now* you have "the flesh" besides. Is the flesh perfectible? It is quite right to pray that "spirit, and soul, and body" may be kept for Christ; but that villain *flesh*, what can you do but keep it down, mortify, reduce, and humble it?

Ah! we want to have Scripture thoughts on these things; we want to get out of our own thoughts. We have no greater enemy than fleshly religiousness. The flesh shall perish.

Tell me; what is it that is to be glorified? Is it the flesh and the spirit? No, it is the new man in Christ.

The complex person, is it to be glorified? No; the flesh shall perish, but the new shall be clothed in glory.

The new nature cannot sin, because it is born of God. If you say the new nature can sin, you say Christ can sin! What a horrible thought!

Another has explained the seed of God to be the truth in the energy of the Holy Ghost, it then becomes what is here called the seed of God. Of course it is easy to talk intellectually of truth and of God; but the less traffic about these things the better, if the intellect only be at work. But the more of the unctuous power of truth, the better for us.

The living man is to manifest his life. (v. 10.)

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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How? Exactly in the opposite way to which Adam went. Adam was disobedient; you are to be obedient. Exactly opposite to the way of Cain. Cain hated his brother; you are to love your brother. It is to be righteousness and love in opposition to disobedience and hatred. These are manifestations of nature. The nature is first shown, and then the expression of it. The old nature expresses itself by sin and hatred, the new by righteousness and love. Is it difficult? Yet it is unfolded by patient thought.

We are here in company with the eleventh chapter of Leviticus. This Epistle of John is the New Testament eleventh of Leviticus, and in this way the eleventh of Leviticus gives the marks of the clean animal; one, the inner energy, the other, the outer walk.

And here it is exactly so. The new nature has two divine Levitical marks, namely, the chewing of the cud, expressing the inner energy of love; and the cloven hoof, the outer walk. We need not obliterate these marks.

May we justify God in these things. Having implanted a new nature in us, is it not fitting that He should tell us how that nature expresses itself? You may remark here that we are kept in company with Adam and with Cain; because John is so personal. John takes us beyond the time of Enoch and of Noah (of the heavenly and the earthly man) back to the deep personalities of Eve and Adam. So all John's writings bring us back to primitive things.

The world is a Cain; yes, it is a Cain, beaten out and spread abroad. (v. 11.) Cain was an atheist; he hated his brother because of the love and sympathy there was between his brother and God.

The world is an atheist, and its "gods many and lords many" (1 Cor. viii. 5) do not redeem it one whit from that character. It may have "gods many and lords many," and be an atheist still. And now, do not you be wondering if the world hate you. The world does not know you any more than it knows Christ. As He said, "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John xv. 19.) "Marvel not." (v. 13.)

We have got the principle that extricates us from the world, namely, love; and we love the brethren. (v. 14.) Else, if we love not the brethren (iv. 8.) we know not God.

What profound thoughts we meet with, as calmly and dispassionately we pass along; very simple, very grand! "In Christ" we have more than in Adam; nature, life, and God all regained, and with advantage. Christ is more than Repairer of the breach. Out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness. (Judges xiv. 14.) Nature, undefilable; life, unforfeitable; and by the expression of these, we know that we have escaped the pollutions of the world that lieth in "the wicked one." (v. 19.)

In the first chapter you have the message that "God is light." Now you have another message, that "God is love"; and we should love one another.

"From the beginning" means that which is *essentially true*, that which could not be anything but true. The message to walk in light and love is essentially divine. John's writings thus take you back to the early part of Genesis, because, as we have seen, he deals not in dispensational but in personal truth; no heavenly rapture; no re-

newed earth, but something beautiful beyond these things. It is the Lord's close, personal dealings with the sinner in the Gospel of John; and in the Epistles His dealings with the saint.

Long has this been the comfort of my soul. I do not care how things around may go on, as far as my state before God is concerned. You are disappointed everywhere! Well, what can that do but throw you more completely upon God?

The sinner is outside the camp with Jesus, as in the fourth, eighth, and ninth chapters of the Gospel; and it neither matters as to the number of his sins nor of his accusers. These would but press the individual more closely on Jesus. You find the state of things around confused, shameful, painful. It is all these; yet it can never touch your connection and communion with God. You must know where you are yourself, of course. Do you take care of your place in the Church, and God will take care of your place in Christ.

Cain was the expression of hatred, Adam of disobedience. Now, these two Levitical marks of love and righteousness are the exact contradictions of Cain and Adam. When the message says, "Love one another," it looks in the face of Cain. There is plenty of murder abroad now; murder for revenge and robbery; but these are not Cain murders. Cain's was a martyr murder. It was religious persecution, hatred of one whom God loved, and it expresses the world's hatred of the Church. "I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John xv. 19.)

Matthew may tell you of a rejected Messiah; John tells you of the atheist world; and this is religious malevolence. They think they do God service. (John xvi. 2.) It is the way of Christ-

endness to shed blood on religious principle; and that gives you the world in the company of Cain. Just look at the seventh chapter of John, and do mark it: "Go ye up unto this feast: I go not yet up unto this feast." (John vii. 8.) You may go, but the world hates me; and this uttered in the face of the world's religion. The world is going to keep the feast, yet hates God's Representative in the world. Exactly so, the world is full of the Cain principle. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." (v. 14.) The world hates you with an atheist hatred, because it knows neither the Father nor the Son.

These are the deep truths we find in John's writings. And do you think the worship of deities, of "gods many and lords many" redeems the character of this world from the charge of atheism? No, it never can relieve man from the charge: "Ye neither know me nor my Father." (John viii. 19.) To know God in the face of Jesus Christ is true religion; all other is idolatry. If you do not see God in the face of Jesus Christ, you are "without God." (Eph. ii. 12.) Jesus was not only God in His person, as the second Person of the Godhead, but was morally God; "God manifest in the flesh." Not only is it that the second Person of the Godhead has become incarnate, taking flesh and blood, but as such Jesus is the moral Representative of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

But this is a form of manifestation of which we do not often think. Every action and look of Jesus was perfection, and presented the perfection of man to God, and of God to man. The world did not know this, nor does it know that while worshipping Jupiter and Juno, and rejecting God

in the face of Jesus Christ, it is as much an atheist as ever. If I can deny God "in the face of Jesus Christ" I know nothing about God. (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

It is this manifestation of God in the ways of Jesus that John is so full of! May our hearts hang over it! Has God been here? Yes! He has come down in flesh, and dwelt in moral beauty amid the scenes of our daily life. We speak not as touching other truths, but of this, as the foundation of all. And what is the world doing this moment? The Protestant world has been making an exhibition of itself in one way, and the Roman Catholic world in another. A secular exhibition in one place, a religious exhibition in the other. Ah! beloved! God has exhibited HIMSELF; He is exhibiting His unseen glory; and shall I gaze on *man's* exhibitions, whether secular or religious? The Lord helping me, I shall gaze at Him. I shall enter into the holiest, and worship God as His glory shines "in the face of Jesus Christ."

Now, what is the exhibition of God to us? Love to the brethren. If we love the brethren we have escaped the Cain condition, and the Spirit draws the contrast strongly in the fifteenth and sixteenth verses. In the fifteenth verse we have the taking away of life *from* another; in the sixteenth the laying down of life *for* another. *Hatred* takes away life; *love* lays down its own life. In the fourteenth verse the eye of the Spirit is set exclusively on Christian brethren. Here it is more abstract, that is, the principle of love and hatred. Love is exhibited in God by the laying down of life. But there is great beauty in the Spirit's not having given the words "of God." (v. 16.) It is "of God" surely; but there is a great delicacy

in the way of the Holy Ghost in this passage. We have the truth that Christ indeed was God, and laid down His life for us. In Romans v. 8, we read that "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If Christ was not God this would be a vain argument without effect. And again, in John iii. 16. "God so loved the world," etc. But there is a harshness in the reading given here in the supplying of the words "of God."

A necessary truth is stated in verse 17. What place has the love of God in my heart, such love as God has shown, if I refuse to sympathize with my brother? You had better confess it at once, that in so much as you act on narrow principles you have not the love of God in you. Could narrow thoughts occupy that heart in which the love of God dwelleth? No, this is simple argument; and if I refuse to share my goods with my brother, God's love does not dwell in me. One has beautifully said, "If you love in *word*, it is idle; or in *tongue*, it is deceitful; not so to love in deed and in truth. So to love is the opposite of deceit and idleness; it is love in reality."

There is great force in verse 19: "Hereby we know that we are of the truth." Adam accepting the lie was morally ruined; but we are not of the lie, but of the truth; we have returned to God. To be of the truth is to be a new creature, born of God, begotten of His own will. (2 Cor. v. 17; John i. 13; Jas. i. 18.) If you take your place amongst those who are of the truth, you are a new creature "in Christ Jesus." The truth is the seed of God forming you anew and with power.

"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than

our heart, and knoweth all things." (v. 20.) Conscience may indeed be severe, a fine filter to pass your actions through, but there is a finer, there is a subtler sieve than your deceitful heart. Many a thing passes through the coarse sieve of your conscience, which cannot pass the eye of God. You may be satisfied about your ways. Still Paul says, Though I do not condemn myself, yet am I not thereby justified. It is not my own judgment that can justify.

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God." (v. 21.) As I have said, this is moral, and not judicial, justification. It is not judicial position, but moral nature. John occupies himself with our moral recovery. You have the judicial recovery in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and boldness to enter into the holiest. You stand justified in Christ Jesus, in divine righteousness, in the Epistle to the Romans; but that is not the confidence here in John. This confidence is from another source; it is because the heart does not condemn.

And what more shall I say to this marvellous variety? Look at the floor of the world studded with various beauties, and then at the moral world, and see a more exquisite variety. If I go into the holiest because the blood is on the mercy seat, I can go again because my heart does not condemn.

"And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments." (v. 22.) Mark says, "What things soever ye desire" (xi. 24.) John says, "If . . . my words abide in you"; and here again, "Because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

Is there any collision between these things? None! The three things are necessary, namely, *faith, abiding, and obedience*. Lay your requests before God as an obedient child, with a beating heart! Oh! what it would be to be simple in our intimacy with Christ. Little we know of it; therefore we must speak of it. But oh! to be going in and out, and finding pasture, as the flock of a well-known land.

And now love one another, as He gave us commandment, and believe in Jesus Christ, and you shall take in moral power, a better position than Adam lost. He lost Eden, Eve, himself, and God. When new created, you get God in a richer way than Adam had Him; you get a better nature, a better life, and a better portion. May you believe that, as a sinner now accepted, you enjoy *yourself* in a way that innocent Adam never enjoyed himself! Are you conscious of having regained yourself in a higher character than ever? Is it not more blessed to pass ages with Christ, as a pardoned sinner, than to have the delights of Eden?

In Paul's Epistle the simple statement is made, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. viii. 9.) But here we have the Spirit distinguishing Himself. (v. 24.) God gives His own blessed Spirit to dwell in the believer, and then the Spirit characterizes Himself. We have seen Him, as *Uction, Earnest, and Seal*, and now He displays a new characteristic. But this would take us into the fourth chapter.

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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 Contents and Character of the New Testament.

THE unlettered Christian receives the New Testament in the form in which it is distributed.

It may be that he cannot demonstrate its authenticity; but he happily profits by the fact that the Church receives it. It comes thus into his possession, and, when he reads it, he finds it divine.

God thus uses means to spread the truth, and the Book which contains it. The multitude of believers profit by it. It is God who acts thus.

If any answers must be given to unbelievers, who dispute the authority of the Word, it may be that, amongst those who receive and enjoy it, only a few are able convince gainsayers. But

that does not hinder God from using the Scriptures, and giving faith to those who receive them.

He whose heart and mind are exercised in the Word according to God, finds not only the proof of its divinity in the application of passage after passage to his conscience, but he gains the deepest conviction of ITS PERFECTION AS A WHOLE, through the knowledge thus obtained of the fullness of Christ.

I will take an instance which is sometimes used to prove that there are things in the New Testament which are outside the province of spiritual discernment.

The Spirit of God cannot, it is said, make us feel the value of a genealogy.

Such a remark only betrays ignorance of the Word of God and of Christ Himself.

To set forth the varied glory of Jesus, according to the counsels of God respecting Him, it is needful to present the different characters which He bears. This is the substance of God's revelation.

Now, His connection with Abraham and David, and His connection with Adam, are leading points in this revelation; and the genealogies of the New Testament set this before us.

But this is not all. They correspond exactly with the character of the Gospels in which we find them.

The Gospel by MATTHEW, in which the genealogy is traced from Abraham and David, treats especially of the *Messiah*; of the relation of Christ to the Jews; of the fulfilment of prophecy in Him; and, at the same time, of His rejection as Messiah, and the transition to a new dispensation.

IN MARK we get the Lord's service, and therefore nothing about His birth. He is specially seen as the Servant-Prophet.

LUKE sets before us the great features of grace brought in by "the Second Man," and the great moral principles connected with this grace; so that, in the body of this Gospel, events are not arranged in chronological order, but according to their moral bearing. This is true, even in the history of the temptation. In this Gospel the genealogy is traced up to Adam.

JOHN, on the contrary, gives us the person of the Saviour, who is above all the dispensational dealings of God in the earth, the Jews being throughout set aside as rejected, and therefore no genealogy is given. "The Word was God." John's Gospel begins before Genesis, and at the close we find neither the agony in Gethsemane nor the being forsaken on the cross; but other things are mentioned which are not found in Matthew or in Luke.

Thus the different glories of Christ are manifested; and by degrees the admirable perfection of the Word shines forth in all its splendour. The criticisms of man fade away, like the stars before the sun, which make them disappear with the darkness that allowed them to be seen.

The Bible presents us with a perfection, both in its details and as a whole, which leaves no doubt in the mind of one who has tasted it, that, as a complete whole, it is divine.

If MATTHEW were wanting, we should not have the Messiah, Son of David, and Son of Abraham. If MARK were wanting, we should not have the Servant made in the likeness of man, a Prophet on the earth; if LUKE, we should not have the

Son of Man; if JOHN, we should lose the Son of God.

In the ACTS we find the foundation of the Church, by the power of the Spirit of God; the commencement and development of the Church in Jerusalem, through the instrumentality of the twelve; then the Gentiles grafted into the good olive tree by Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision; and, when Jerusalem had rejected the testimony, the Church fully revealed, and called by the ministry of Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles.

The EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS furnishes the eternal principles of God's relationship with man, the way in which, by means of Christ, dead and risen, the believer is established in blessing, and the reconciling of these things with the speciality of the promises made to the Jews, by Him whose gifts and calling are without repentance.

In the First and Second CORINTHIANS are found details respecting the internal regulation of a Church; its walk, its order, its restoration when it had gone astray; the patience and energy of grace; the whole being sketched by the Spirit of God, acting through an apostle, and declaring the divine authority of his commands

In GALATIANS we find the contrast between Law and Promise, as well as the source of ministry; in a word, the condemnation of Judaism, even in its very roots.

EPHESIANS presents to us the relationship of the believer with the Father and with Christ, and the fulness of the Church's privileges, as the body of Christ, her connection with Him, and "the mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations," in which all the counsels of

God for His own glory are unfolded.

In COLOSSIANS the fulness which dwells in the Head for the body is set forth, and the solemn warning is given not to separate practically from this union with the Head, through allowing a show of humility to glide into the bosom of the Church.

In PHILIPPIANS, we have the Apostle's experience of what Christ is to the Christian, as sufficient for all things, whatever his position may be; His immediate sufficiency, even when the Christian should be deprived of apostolic support; and the walk of the Church in the unity of grace, in unity maintained by grace, when the spiritual energy of her human leaders should be wanting. It is a precious epistle in this point of view.

I. AND II. THESSALONIANS give us the hope of the Church in the freshness of her affections; and the mystery of iniquity ending in the manifestation of the man of sin; a mystery notwithstanding which the Church is called to maintain this hope and to cherish these affections.

TIMOTHY and TITUS exhibit what may be termed ecclesiastical care for the maintenance whether of truth or of order; 1 TIMOTHY, the normal order of the Church; 2 TIMOTHY, the path of the individual when the Church is in disorder, and when there is general false profession of Christianity.

All these present salvation and life.

In the EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS, the Church is seen seated as a body in the heavenly places.

In the EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, the faithful are viewed as journeying in weakness upon the earth, and Christ is consequently seen apart, as appearing for them in the presence of God in

heaven. This is in contrast with the earthly figures given to Israel. This gives rise to a glorious unfolding of the Person of our Lord, as God the Creator, as Man, and as the Son over His own house, the Creator of all things, and lastly as High Priest. His priesthood is very largely set forth. It is after the order of Melchizedek as to His personal rights; after the likeness of Aaron, or rather in contrast with Aaron, as to its present exercise. This leads to the unfolding of the life of faith, the faith common to all saints; and to the final separation of the believing Jews from the camp of earthly religion, as having "come to the heavenly Jerusalem."

JAMES sets before us that girdle of practical righteousness which restrains the natural tendency of the heart to abuse grace; faith must be real or living faith; and the last dealings of God with the twelve tribes (as in Jonah with the Gentiles) when the light and perfection of a new order of things eclipsed that old order, to which those tribes had proved unfaithful.

PETER gives us the government of God; in 1 PETER, in blessing to saints as far as was applied; in 2 PETER, in reference to the wicked.

In the FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER we find the Christian a pilgrim on the earth, placed in this position by the power of Christ's resurrection, according to an election which is not that of an earthly people, but unto eternal life. This epistle was addressed to the Jews of the dispersion (Peter being the apostle of the Circumcision), and was particularly adapted to them, setting them free from the idea of an earthly establishment, to be,

through grace, pilgrims on the earth, in view of an incorruptible inheritance.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER is written in the prospect of his departure, and of the flowing in of evil. It exhorts them to press forward. On the one hand, it gives the picture and the assurance of the glory of the coming kingdom, in its heavenly aspect, but manifested on the earth; on the other, the corruption which would degrade and swallow up Christianity; and the consequences of this in judgment. Peter never represents the Church as one body in heaven, as Paul does; he views her, or rather, her members, as on the earth, and as pilgrims there. The exact correspondence of every detail with this point of view, even in the manner of presenting the glory (2 Peter i.) manifests a perfection which proves its Divine origin.

JUDE admirably unfolds all the moral features of the apostasy,* its beginnings and its results; recording the solemn prophecy of Enoch, which we should otherwise have lost, and thus proving how clear, even before the Flood, was the testimony of God, who is unchangeable in purpose from the beginning to the end.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN presents us with all the features of the Divine nature, and that as life; first of all, as manifested in Jesus, and then as characteristic of the whole family. The epistle is thus a safeguard against every pretension, which, wanting in these features, would seek to pervert the faithful. It is the means also

* Where there is similarity between Jude and Peter, there is a profound moral difference. Peter speaks of wickedness in connection with government. Jude of apostasy from a first estate.

of strengthening and establishing Christians, by the development of those qualities which belong to the nature of God, with whom, if light be in them, they have communion, as the Father and the Son, and in whom, if love be in them, they dwell.

PHILEMON, and the two lesser Epistles of JOHN, show us that if the mystery of God is revealed to us by one apostle, and the nature of God set evidently before us by another; if they lift us up to the height of His counsels and of His being, they can also be occupied with the interests of a runaway slave and his master; with the anxieties and practical difficulties of an excellent lady, who was to reject those who did not bring the truth; with a kind and worthy brother, as to receiving persons to whom Christian love would open the door, insisting on the truth but refuting the jealousy of a local selfish person, who desired to have things in his own hands. They show us that that *love* which dwells in God, which is the very nature of God, which is manifested in the glorious work of Christ; that *wisdom*, which ordains all mysteries for His eternal glory, disdains not to provide, with perfect delicacy, for the difficult relationships between a master and his slave; nor to manifest the tenderest solicitude with respect to the details of life. This love, in the perfection of wisdom and grace, links the fulness and perfection of God with every emotion of the human heart, with every circumstance of our life in this world. It sanctifies, by the revelation of what God is, a people who are to dwell with Him, and fits them for His presence by creating pure affections, by making a holy love the spring of their whole life.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

105

IN THE REVELATION, the Spirit of God gives, at the outset, in an admirable review of the state of seven Asiatic churches, the elements of a perfect judgment with respect to every state in which the professing Church would be found, and guiding any one connected with the Church in these circumstances. He, at the same time, encourages the faithfulness of those who have ears to hear, by promises of blessing from above, *specially suited to the difficulties of these several conditions*. He declares that these blessings are prepared for "him that overcometh" in the conflict into which he is brought by the declension of the Church. This declension had already commenced in the days of the apostle, in their leaving their first love; it will end in compelling Christ to spue out of His mouth those who bear *His name*.

Such is the substance of that which the Spirit of God gives us in the earlier chapters of this book. Having thus furnished the Christian with all that he needs in the midst of the difficulties presented by the state of the professing Church; and having revealed the judgment of Christ with a perfection and a circumstantial adaptation which are most admirable, the Holy Ghost then lifts the veil, to show how all this will end in the judgment of the world. He reveals chastenings, first of all in outward things; then more directly upon man himself: afterwards, He discloses all the features of man's dreadful apostasy, the diabolical organization of his forces against Christ; and, at length, the judgment which will break forth at the coming of Christ Himself, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

This judgment is to make way for an adminis-

tration of blessing and happiness (Satan being bound), which will only be interrupted by his being loosed from his prison, to test those who have enjoyed this happiness, and thus to bring on the final judgment of the dead, and the eternal state in which God will be "all in all." (1 Cor. xv. 28.)

This is the methodical and complete development of that which Jude, 2 Peter, and 2 Thesalonians had made known to the Church in its moral elements. At the close of the book we have more particularly unfolded to us the connection of the Church with Christ in heaven, and with the times of blessing under His reign.

There is another striking feature of the perfection of The Revelation, which may be noticed here; that is, its moral unity. The standing of the Church is indeed defined in the opening and concluding paragraphs, by the expression of her own sentiments; but throughout the book there is not one thought connected with the living communication of *grace* from the Head to the members. It is a prophetic book of *judgment*, treating first of all that relates to the Church, as seen in its responsibility upon the earth. In this portion of it there are promise, threatening, warning, judgment of its condition, revelation of the characters of the Son of Man, everything connected with responsibility. But the Head, the source of life and knowledge to the body, is not mentioned as such.

After the judgment of the Church, comes that of the world, the Church being seen on high; a judgment increasing in severity, up to the destruction of the Wicked One. In this part of the book is found all that the faithful need in order

to understand the ways of God, and to discern the path which He has marked out for them in these perilous times; but Christ as the living source of *grace* is never referred to. Everything is in its right place, for it is the work of God.

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

VII.

THESE profound thoughts are not like the beautiful flow of Luke, to whom the eye so often turns, and finds all its human desires answered. Here, chastened, we linger over every line, and as we do so, a world unknown peeps out upon us. We are not borne along a flowing, easy current with sensible delight, but, stopping at every undulation, we find unknown worlds opening themselves before us. Truly it is a wealthy place into which we are brought!

The first six verses of chapter iv. form a very serious portion of Scripture.

Another subject commences at the seventh verse, and between the two is a close and beautiful moral connection.

Here I would say that what I meant by calling the Lord Jesus the moral Representative of God was that He was the representative of the divine character. He was God incarnate, and that in every characteristic.

We talk commonly of the likeness of two persons. When we say that they are like in face, we mean that there is a physical likeness; but if we say they are like in character, that is the moral likeness. Now, we see both in Christ. He

is the express Image of God's person, and morally he is God as to His character, while He is God Himself too.

We have now another subject, which is not another. (v. 7.) But the change is, that from speaking of the person of Christ, the apostle passes on to speak of His nature, His divine nature. This is the way you would describe a man, and this is the way the Spirit describes Christ, in whose person we first reach God, and find that He is love. We reach one of whom we may say with Wesley, "His nature and His name is Love."

Turn back now to the twenty-fourth verse of the third chapter: "And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit that He hath given us." And then in the first verse, chapter four, "Beloved, believe not every spirit."

These verses are closely connected. When the Spirit is noticed, He is characteristically described. It is not merely the Spirit, but the Spirit in you and me, and His character as producing a true confession of Christ. The Holy Ghost has indeed other characteristics. We have Him as *Uction*, *Earnest*, and *Seal*, and in you and me He makes intercession as the Spirit of adoption, crying, "Abba, Father." (Rom. viii.)

Amongst other characteristics of this blessed One, is that He makes confession that Jesus Christ is come in flesh. Could you part with this? In Romans you have the truth thus put: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. viii.) Here you have the Spirit *in you*, characterized by the confession that Jesus is the Christ.

The Spirit of God has made you His dwelling-

place, in fulfilment of the words of the Lord, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John xiv.) And now, if the Spirit of God is dwelling in you, let me ask, Is He there in inactivity? No! in action! And if in action, He shows what you are in His character of "unction from the Holy One." As Earnest, He shows what you shall be. As the Spirit of Adoption, He teaches you to cry, "Abba, Father." As Intercessor, He pleads for you and in you with groanings that cannot be uttered. (Rom. viii.)

By necessity the Spirit is active. He could not be otherwise by His very nature, and thus we are taught to know He is in us by *His energies*. One of them is a sound confession of Christ. (v. 2.)

Now, if I meet anyone who will turn aside from this confession, even suppose him to be a saint, he is not therein moved by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost knows Christ, and He lets the saint know Christ; and what He teaches of Him is, that He is perfect; perfect in His manhood, perfect in His Godhead; one whole person; God and man, one Christ.

This is the grand fact that links you with God. No other victim could have done, but the Man Christ Jesus. The person and work of Jesus have opened the way for me to return to God. How important was that confession of Peter in answer to the inquiry of Jesus, "Whom do ye say that I am?" "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" and how striking the Lord's response: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 13-18.) How blessedly simple this is! God

Himself has provided a channel by which the water *of life* may flow even to me! And this they never would have done had not Christ come in the flesh.

Let us look full in the face of this verity of the Godhead and the manhood. This is the channel for the water of life or atonement. If I touch either His manhood or His Godhead, I have broken down the altar, and destroyed the only channel for the water of life. Is it not well to repeat it? Everything hangs on the person of Christ; and it is a glorious acting of the Spirit in the individual which produces a sound profession of Christ.

To talk of human things. If I wanted water to be brought from Wicklow, I should cut *all* the way. How should I be served if the channel reached but half the way? Nay, it must come every bit of the way from the source to myself, in order to serve me. I use this figure to express my meaning. There are many human errors, many of us have been guilty in this matter. I myself have before now. Not that there was the least question as to the glorious Person, but in speaking we slip aside at times from true expression of feeling and of truth. In Jesus we have God and Man. As one has said, "He laid His hand upon both; and by His own person He raised a living arch to join the two for ever!" And now, if I look upon the altar, I see justice satisfied; as we have been singing :

"No victim of inferior worth

Could ward the stroke that justice aimed;

For none but He, in heaven or earth,

Could offer that which justice claimed."

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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But now I am as *righteously* restored as before I was *righteously* condemned. It is as righteous of God to bring us back as it was to banish us. When Adam heard and believed the promise from God to the seed of the woman, he was then as righteously in the presence of God, as he was before behind the trees of the garden. Once you get this Victim on the altar, all question as to righteousness is over, and now we speak of life flowing through Him as a channel.

Is the channel, then, long enough to reach to me in my lost and distant condition? Yes, it is cast up, cast up before me; for the Son of the living God is this Jesus of Nazareth! All is eternally settled. My person is justified; life is secured to me. Mighty mystery! Is it any wonder that, with such results depending, I find the Spirit a sound Confessor? Is not everything hanging on the person of Christ? And look how the Spirit follows in the steps of Christ when Christ was where He was, full of activity for you; and now the Holy Ghost has come down, and is full of activity in you. You know well enough what it is to have the intellect or the affections active. Do you know as well what it is to have the Spirit active? Is He crying, "Abba, Father!" in your heart? Is He testifying by a sound confession of Him?

Here we have another blessed characteristic of the Spirit, namely, that of Overcomer of the world. (v. 4.) Do you believe that? And mark again how He follows Christ. The Son was Conqueror here; the Spirit in the saint is Conqueror here. Jesus conquered the deceiver in this world; in you and me the Spirit does the same. It is blessed to see the person and the

divine nature thus working together and gaining victories.

Now, if any one touches the person of Christ, do you gain the victory? If any one touches the verity of the manhood as of the Godhead, do you not shrink by that instinct that makes you shrink at the least touch? And well you may, beloved, for greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world.

Verse 6 is wonderful passage! Ah! well might such truths as these put your souls in the temple! Not into the school to discuss a question, but into the sanctuary to worship! Well may it set you to rest on this conclusion, that everything rests on the person of Christ. Well may you exclaim, "As for *me*, as far as I'm concerned, if Christ Jesus be not God and Man, the fount of life has not begun to flow." Ay, it might, but for this glorious person, have flowed on for ever and ever, and never have reached me. Well can we understand that upon *this rock* the Church is built, with a power that shall withstand the gates of hell (Matt. xvi. 18.) And can we think with patience that the deceiver should so far prevail as to find ONE who could consent to call Peter "the rock"? What thought can such have of their own sins? The rock is the person of Christ; Peter confesses Him, and Jesus says, "Upon this rock," etc. Ah! I feel that we are dealing with a fact that is immense. This is the One who went to the altar to make an atonement for my soul. The God-man went and satisfied the Throne, and surely when the Throne is satisfied, you ought to be so. The victim has opened the whole road from the living God to the sinner. (Heb. x. 19, 20; Song of Sol. vi. 3; Heb. xiii. 5.)

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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 Epistle to the Church at Philippi.

IN considering any book of Scripture, it is very helpful to follow through some particular line of truth of which it treats.

For instance, Ephesians treats of the Church of God as the body of Christ; Colossians, the glories of the Head of the body, and the mischievous results of not holding the Head. In Galatians, the apostle contends uncompromisingly for the finished work of Christ, glorying in the cross, as separating us from the world, and putting an end to all fleshly pretensions; he refuses everything supplemental to the work of Christ, as subversive of it, and damaging to souls.

There is much more, no doubt, in all these epis-

ties; but the above remarks refer to prominent points.

In Philippians, Christian devotedness is a prominent theme.

Some may be ready to ask, What are we to understand by Christian devotedness? To which we reply, Did not our Lord refer to this subject when He said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"? (Luke ix. 23.) Devotedness is heartily yielding ourselves to the claims of Christ, and therefore refusing the claims of self and of the world. In a word, Christian devotedness is following Christ, walking as He walked.

You will observe that this epistle is addressed to those who are in Christ, "*To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi,*" as we read in the first verse. This is surely where God began with us: "When we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii.) This is the beginning of our history as saints, and is the starting-point of true devotedness to Christ. A person cannot be said to be intelligently on the ground of Christian devotedness till he enters by faith upon this new position, which God has given him as a new creation in Christ Jesus.

This is again alluded to in the third chapter, where four characteristics of true Christians are grouped together.

1. With such there is no question of mending or improving man in the flesh. The death of Christ forbids the thought. On the contrary, we have judged "the flesh, with its affections and

lusts," to be so irremediably bad, that we have accepted its crucifixion under the judgment of God, with Christ, and set it aside as unfit for God or His service: "We are the circumcision."

2. We so know God in Christ as the Giver of His Son, and the source of all our blessings, that our hearts adoringly go out to Him in praise: "*We worship God in the Spirit.*"

3. We so know Him who has loved us, and glorified God in our redemption, as to delight in the infinite glory of His person, and His highest exaltation: "We rejoice in Christ Jesus."

4. Seeing God's estimate of our old man in the cross, we refuse the claims of the flesh, its resources and pretensions, as unworthy of our trust; and that not only as regards flesh in ourselves, but as in any one else: "We have no confidence in the flesh."

It is plain, then, that the starting-point of all true Christian devotedness is the apprehension of our new standing, position, and relationships as "in Christ Jesus."

I. THE ENERGY OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS is connected with rejoicing in the Lord. Apart from Him we are perfect weakness. "Without Me," said Jesus to His disciples, "ye can do nothing." (John xv. 5.) Taken up with Him, we are attracted to Him, find Him to be our strength, and are drawn on in His ways. Again and again, in this brief epistle, is this rejoicing alluded to, like another witness, reminding us that "the joy of the Lord" is our "strength." The heart being set free from self and sin, finds in Him an unchanging source of joy and strength. This epistle does not take up the question of guilt or sins; but the soul is taken up with the

Lord, and stayed upon Him. Peace, communion, and devotedness is the divine order. It is when our hearts are enjoying the sweetness and perfectness of divine love, disentangled from self and circumstances, standing in liberty in Christ, that we are free to follow Him with girded loins, "holding forth the word of life." And it is our happy privilege to "rejoice in the Lord always."

II. THE SPRING OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS is the knowledge of the moral excellencies, perfections, and worth of Christ Himself. The apostle Paul could say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. (iii. 7, 8.)" Paul had seen the Man in the glory of God. The perfections of Him had disclosed to him the failure of all else. The brightness of that light had made manifest the imperfection of all that in which he had gloried.

No one could speak more truly of a blameless life in his dealings with his fellow-men than Paul. As to his pedigree, he was of pure Israelitish blood, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of a favoured tribe, zealous in the Jews' religion above many, an out-and-out Pharisee, a strict adherent to Jewish ordinances and legal ways; but when he put all these things together in the light of the presence of the glorified Son of God, he found that self and pride, unbelief and vain-glory, abounded in them all; so that those things which had been gain to him he now felt to be positive loss, and not for the honour of God. Having had to do with that blessed Man, who is at God's

right hand, Paul's heart was so captivated that he never could be satisfied till he was with Him.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS are largely set forth in this epistle. It is to have in us "the mind which was in Christ Jesus"; like Him, to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation . . . lights in the world, holding for the the word of life." As redeemed by Christ, standing in Christ, and aiming to walk as He walked, it is easy to understand that such would therefore see everything in relation to Christ, and value everything according to Him; and this is remarkably brought out in the first chapter of this short epistle. Thus if, as in the sixth verse, the apostle thinks of God's present work, or, as in the tenth verse, he is occupied with the walk of the saints, he looks at both as they will appear in the "day of Christ" that day when everything will come out as known to God, when all will be made manifest, and all His saints will have reward from Him according to their works.

If the heart of the apostle goes out after the saints, he thinks and feels for them, not as they are seen by men, but as they are precious to the deepest feelings of the heart of Him who loves them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood. He could say, "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all *in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*" (v. 8.)

If he looked at the galling chains which bound him, and so painfully pressed upon him, a prisoner for the truth's sake, he could think of those heavy irons as associated with the Lord Jesus, whom he served, and for whom he suf-

ferred. Hence he called these fetters his "bonds in Christ." He saw Christ, as it were, written on every link of his chain. By faith he so looked to Him, trusted Him, so received everything out of His hand, that he knew his chains to be as he said, his "bonds in Christ." (v. 13.)

Then as to preaching. Here too the *person* of his adorable Lord was everything. It was not merely the quantity, as people now call it, of evangelical machinery, but whether Christ, that blessed Man in the glory, was exalted in it. It was not enough for the apostle that persons preached *about Christ*, but whether the person, *Christ Himself*, was exalted; that was the point; and if so, no matter by whom this was, he could say, "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." (v. 18.)

If bodily health or bodily suffering were the subjects, he seemed to have had but one desire animating his soul; and what could that be in one who knew Christ in the glory to be the one absorbing Object of his heart? Could he consider his own body apart from Him? Certainly not. It was therefore that "*Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death.*" (v. 20.)

As to this *present life*, he could say, "For me to live is Christ." Blessed testimony! True mark of the faithful! It is not merely holding doctrines about Christ, however orthodox they may be, but expressing Christ, showing forth His characteristics, exhibiting His ways, habits, and spirit continually being really yoked with Him who was meek and lowly in heart. What is Christian devotedness but this?

Then as to departing from this world. It was

not rest, or joy, or heaven, or happiness, that fired his soul with hope when he thought of putting off the tabernacle of flesh and blood. No! As in other matters, so here, he looked at it in relation to the great Object of attraction before his heart, that is, Christ Himself. His joy in the prospect of departing was "to be *with Christ*." Blessed prospect! It was not the crown of glory, the deliverance from sorrow, or even the positive and eternal enjoyment of the place. No; it was to be with Him, as it must be with every truly devoted heart; Christ there as well as Christ here. "Having a desire to depart, and to be *with Christ*." (v. 23.)

IV. EXAMPLES OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS are found in the second chapter. The Lord Jesus Himself, of course, stands first and foremost in all His infinite and glorious perfections; then Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, each in his measure, are strikingly set before us. The imprisoned apostle's sorrow at this time was, that "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"; that other interests came in to displace the claims of Christ; that self became an object. The apostle therefore pointed them to the lowly, obedient Son of God, as the true and perfect pattern of devotedness, marked as it was with humiliation and rejection here, though followed by the highest exaltation above. He desires, therefore, that this mind which was in Him may characterize them. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Thus the steps of this perfect One are traced in His path of unfailing obedience and self-abnegation, making Himself of no reputation, always delighting to do the will of Him that sent Him, and not stopping short of the entire surrender of Himself unto death, "even the death of the cross."

To Him their eyes are here directed as the One to be imitated and followed, who certainly looked not on His own things, but whose heart was set on glorifying the Father on the earth, and finishing the work which He gave Him to do.

Then Timothy is brought before us, as another whose heart was unselfishly set upon the welfare of others, at a time too when "all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's." The apostle on this account speaks of sending him to Philippi, if the Lord so ordered. (*vv.* 19, 20.)

Epaphroditus is also introduced into this blessed group of devoted servants, in company with our adorable Master. Instead of seeking his own things, we are told that for the work of Christ he was sick nigh unto death; and so completely did he set aside selfish considerations, that he did not regard his own life, so that he might

accomplish his service to the beloved apostle of our Lord. (*vv.* 26-30.)

Thus in the second chapter the perfect One is first set before us as the great exemplar of devotedness, and then men of like passions with ourselves, who, through grace, had, in their measure, the mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus.

V. THE PATH OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS is blessedly marked out in the third chapter. It begins with the excellent knowledge of Christ (*v.* 7), and terminates with His coming again. (*v.* 20.) The one who pursues this path resembles a runner at the games, pressing on most perseveringly toward the mark for the prize. His heart is so single that "one thing" absorbs his energies. He has but one object, namely, that he may win Christ; that is, be actually where He is, in the soul-satisfying enjoyment of seeing his precious Master face to face. In pursuing the path of devotedness, pressing toward the mark for the prize, there were three things which the apostle diligently sought, namely, knowledge, power, and position, while looking for the coming of the Saviour at the end as the bright and blessed hope which lighted up every step of the way.

To sight and sense the path of devotedness to Christ is fraught with difficulties, but faith knows no halting place, counts nothing worthy of a moment's delay, and looks for no rest till rest with the Lord is obtained. The soul that ardently pursues this path longs above everything to win Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

In looking at these four marks of the path of

true devotedness, knowledge, power, position, and hope, it should not be unnoticed that the path of worldliness and unbelief proposes the same four objects, yet in wide contrast with respect to their real worth.

1. As to KNOWLEDGE, the printing press in this day can scarcely print books fast enough, even with the facilities of steam power, to supply the increasing craving for knowledge of the teeming millions. But what are the object and end of all such knowledge? Does it really climb a step beyond the range of vanity and vexation of spirit "under the sun"? It may boast of "looking from nature up to nature's God"; but does it ever know God in this way? Are we not told that "the world by wisdom knew not God"? (1 Cor. i. 21.) How different was the heart longing of the devoted apostle! He desired knowledge, it is true; but it was "that I may *know Him*," and this was his constant, most fervent desire. To know more of the infinite worth, unsearchable perfections, and moral excellencies of the Lord Himself, was the knowledge that he so craved.

2. With regard to POWER, what is there that men will not give for a little increase of power over their fellow-men? What sacrifices they often make to obtain it? And, after all, it is only a power that exercises its jurisdiction in a world that is under judgment, lying in the wicked one, a power soon to be limited by the chilly hand of death. But the *power* which the Lord's devoted servants desire is not that, but far greater and higher, it is "the power of His resurrection." God has given to us risen life in Christ, who is

the other side of death; and it is the power of that in a world like this, a power that knows its origin to be beyond this present scene altogether, a life in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. It is this risen life in the soul that the apostle so craved the power of, that he might walk here as a risen man, not after the flesh, not like the world, but manifest the walk and conduct of a man on earth who is one with Christ in heaven.

3. The third mark is POSITION. Men will work night and day, and persevere year after year, to raise themselves to a position above others; but the position that Paul so earnestly desired was to be cast out with Christ; to be despised, hated, and to suffer for being like Christ; to suffer for righteousness' sake, and for well-doing; to have "the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." Is this, dear Christian brethren, the position in this world that we are honestly seeking? Is it "the fellowship of His sufferings"? If so, we shall, like the apostles, rejoice at being "counted worthy to suffer shame" for the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts v. 41.)

4. As to HOPE, the world says it is "hoping for better days"; but, alas, how delusive! How it flatters itself in its own eyes! What boastings are heard of "peace and safety"! How largely too it talks of "progress" and "advancement," thus refusing to accept the divine verdict, "Now is the judgment of this world." (John xii. 31.) But the Christian's hope is ever bright and glorious, shedding its gladdening rays over each step of the path of devotedness; for it is the coming of the Lord Himself. As already risen

with Christ, one with Him by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, "we look" not for "earthly things," but "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," when redemption-power will be applied to our bodies, and they will be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and we shall be like Him, and with Him for ever.

Such is the climax of the Christian's pilgrimage, the terminus of the path of devotedness now laid open to us. And how glorious it is! Then we shall indeed "win Christ." The race will have been run. Trials of faith and times of failure will have passed for ever. The wilderness journey will be an event of the past. Hope will be realized. The prize will be possessed. The glory of God and of the Lamb will be actually enjoyed. The path began with our being "*in* Christ," and it ends with our being *with* Christ, and *like* Christ for ever.

VI. Some of the HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS are touched on in the fourth chapter. We may briefly refer, first, to a want of yieldingness: "Let your moderation (yieldingness) be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand"; and secondly, to the heart's being burdened with cares: "Be careful for nothing." (*vv.* 5, 6.) If we trace the ways of Jesus, we never find Him contending for His rights, though He was the only one here who had a right to every thing. But His mind was always to do the will of Him that sent Him. He yielded Himself wholly and unreservedly to the Father's will.

A Christian leaves the path of devotedness the moment he contends for his own rights. He can afford to yield, for "the Lord is at hand"; and men should know us as such: "Let your yield-

ingness be known unto all men." We are to "contend" for one thing, and that "earnestly"; it is "for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3.) We are enjoined also to be "careful for nothing," for when cares are pressing on the mind, our communion with Him who enjoins us to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us, becomes interrupted, and we are weakened and checked in the path of devotedness. It is when we are "careful for nothing," when our yieldingness is known to men and all our requests are made known unto God, that the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And it is when our hearts and minds are occupied with the truth and ways of God, doing His will, that the "God of peace" will be with us. (iv. 5-9.)

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

VIII.

WE now find the Spirit, without changing the subject, ascending from the person of Christ to His divine nature. (v. 7.) Gently leading you along, the Spirit, having taught you to look at the concrete person of Christ, now bids you look at His abstract nature. And is it not blessed to find it all gushing from a fountain which is the nature of God Himself, a scheme set up before the foundation of the world, and all because "God is love" (v. 8.)? Again, we have the test of knowing God. And have you been introduced

to Him? Have you found rest in Him? Do you know that the source of all your blessing is the divine nature? You are a debtor to divine love; go, practise it! If God has thus brought you back to life, go show the family character. Is this unreasonable? Could you be asked less than this? You are in God's family; show it. You fail, you say; to be sure you do, miserably! Selfishness comes in; yes, it does; but tell me, how do you treat it? When it comes, do you treat it as an intruder, as a trespasser in the divine nature?

This verse 7 commences a profound subject. It introduces to the divine nature. Having spoken of Jesus Christ come in the flesh, the Spirit ascends to His nature; and so here it is necessarily abstract thought. This is natural. We must be more abstract in the description of a man's nature than of his person. Having described the person of Christ, it is the natural business of the Spirit to speak of the divine nature in its essential qualities and in its manifestations.

As regards this nature, two distinct statements are made; namely, that "God is light," and "God is love." But the Spirit lingers more over the second than over the first.

"God is light" is the contradiction of the old lie of Satan, "Ye shall not surely die," which accused God of lying.

"God is love" is the contradiction of the other lie, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat?" Ah, then, He has refused you something; He does not love you.

Here, then, are light and love, and they contradict the serpent's lie; and this, as before re-

marked, keeps us in company with the early part of Genesis, where individual, and not dispensational, matters are in question.

The Spirit lingers longer over the love than over the light. Not that it is not quite needful to say both "God is light" and "God is love." If God be not light as well as love, all is over with our souls, and we are left without hope; but the Spirit delights to linger over love, and here (v. 7) He unfolds this subject, showing that not only is God love, but absolutely love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God. All love is of God's creation. There is no other way of comprehending God. Does the beast understand man? No. 1 Corinthians ii. tells me that if you have not the divine nature, you cannot understand God. If you have derived life from God, you have a capacity for understanding Him; not otherwise. If there is no love in you, you are not born of God; you cannot understand Him.

Verse 8 follows as a matter of course. Not having the nature of God, you cannot know Him any more than the beast knows you. There is no such thing as knowing about God without the Spirit. What does the beast of the field know about you? "What man knoweth the things of a man?" etc. (1 Cor. ii. 11.) Where is the fellowship of nature between the beast and you? Neither is there any fellowship between you and God, but love. "He that loveth," etc. *Love* is the *only* moral capacity for understanding God in His own nature. No intellect can ever find Him out. Verse 7 shows the intrinsic necessity of the correspondence between love and God. I bless Him for introducing these thoughts to

me, thoughts of the person of Christ. I have no need to fear, as a worshipper, though I may well fear to meddle, with a careless hand, with these glorious truths. And now let us bless God that He has taken up this glorious Person; that He has sent Him from the throne of heaven to wear our manhood, to take it up to be, as an old writer has said, "The eternal ornament and admiration of His creation."

In verse 9 we have the manifestation of the divine nature. There are three distinct revelations of God made known to us. 1. His personal glory. 2. His essential glory. 3. His character in manifestation.

1. We have the glory of God, the invisible God, whom no man hath seen, or can see; the unapproachable God. Here you have only eternally to worship.

2. We have the divine nature, which can and does display itself in action.

3. We have His character, which may be illustrated, and is so, in the Man Christ Jesus. We are introduced to the glory of God, but no man can penetrate that mystery; it is right to stand inside. This is true, and yet the nature of God can be, and is illustrated: "In this the love of God was manifested." Every virtue in Jesus was a ray of the divine character.

Simple this is to understand, very blessed to grasp. Thus we are largely and fitly introduced to God. If I am introduced to His nature, it is that I may therein find my own blessedness, while His character compels me to cling to Him for ever.

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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).

## God's Gift of Life and of the Holy Spirit.

(Read Galatians ii. 19; iii. 14.)

**T**HERE are two things presented here which distinguish the Christian. The first is an entirely new life in the presence of the Lord Jesus. (Gal. ii. 19, 20.) The second is the possession of the Holy Ghost, in contrast with the law, and also the promises; for the accomplishment is quite distinct from the hope. (Gal. iii.)

The difference is immense; for, in order to enjoy the effect of the promise, it is needful that faith come in and that righteousness be accomplished. The perfect righteousness that Christ is in God's presence must be put on. One cannot have the accomplishment of the promise save in Christ.

The Galatians had, to a certain point, succeeded in introducing some measure of works of the law in order to salvation. Not that the name of Christ was set aside, but His work was despised.

Now, God in His grace has set us before Him without questions; they have been all solved in Christ and God. We are not clear till we have recognized ourselves under the efficacy of all that Christ has done for our salvation; and we cannot enjoy it as long as there are questions to be solved. To enjoy the efficacy of Christ's work is the foundation of all blessing. It is the joy of the full revelation of God.

Abraham had precious promises. (Gen. xv. xvii.) But it is one thing to have promises like those made to Abraham, precious as this is without doubt, a totally different thing to have a full, entire revelation of God in respect of us, such as we have in the epistles.

The work which has been fully and clearly revealed has put me where Jesus is in the presence of God, happy and without a cloud. What Christ has done the law could not do, and did not pretend to it; for the law, having a shadow of things to come, showed, after all, that God could not be revealed therein. (Rom. viii.; Heb. x.)

Why?

Because righteousness was not accomplished; it would have been judgment, for the law demanded its fulfilment. The Holy Ghost tells us that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. (Heb. ix. 8.) God kept Himself in the thick darkness. (1 Kings viii. 12.)

Now, they were seeking to add certain things

## GOD'S GIFT OF LIFE AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. 131

in order to be saved, when the believer was without questions in the presence of God. Therefore the apostle says, "If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." I have done wrong then in overthrowing them; I am a transgressor, and Christ a minister of sin! (Gal. ii.) "But," he adds, "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

What then is the effect of the law, and wherefore serves the law? It was added because of transgressions, but it is not a thing which I could accomplish. The apostle has not even the idea of such a thing, for the law was given to show man that he was a sinner.

The righteousness which is by faith is quite another thing from abiding under the law. I know all the power of the law; it can only condemn me. But now I am dead to the law.

How happy to know the thing by grace, for grace is of little moment to me if I am under law! The knowledge of grace makes me understand that the more God is good the more guilty am I if I offend Him. The revelation of this grace of God, if the law enters and I must render an account, makes one more culpable in every respect.

When Moses came down from the mountain, he brought a ministry of condemnation and death. (Compare Exodus xxxiv. and 2 Cor. iii.) God had proclaimed Himself as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant

in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and sin, and that would by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.)

This was not a ministry of pure grace, as some suppose; for God had said, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." (Exod. xxxii. 33.) But under grace he who sins against such a God is more guilty than a sinner under the ministry of condemnation and death. Nor is this a piece of reasoning; for the word says that Moses put a veil on his face, that the children of Israel could not look to the end of that which is abolished.

If God impute my sin to me, all this goodness does but aggravate my case. What is it that I really want?

The manifestation of righteousness. For whatever was the goodness of God displayed it rendered man more blamable, and promise could not take this away. The people were guilty, and the ministry with which Moses was invested was a ministry of condemnation and death. But the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Rom. iii. 22, 23.)

God, knowing that which should be manifested, bore with sins. The cross has only displayed His righteousness which He has declared *at this time*. We are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitia-



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tion through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness. (Rom. iii. 24, 25.)

The important thing for our souls is that God's righteousness has been fully revealed. It is not that faith denies the authority of the law: "Yea, we establish the law." Faith owns that the law demands perfect righteousness; but it also says, "If I seek my salvation by the works of the law, I am condemned and lost." But now faith says, "I, through the law, am dead to the law." This is what Christ has accomplished for us personally. Christ has put Himself under the sentence of the cross, and by His death I am crucified with Him. The life in which I was responsible, and in which I had sinned, exists no longer.

This is what makes such a total difference.

The life in which God saw me a sinner, the *life to which sin is attached, and consequently condemnation and death, no more exists.* "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

This is not yet all. It is no more a question for me, if I can find the favour of God by keeping the law; for I live no longer according to this life, but in the life of Christ who loved me. My responsibility as to this life is gone; Christ has loved me, and loved me as I am. Such is the sole relation that I know; and I am sure of His love. It is the action of Christ for me which has set me thus, and not mine for Him.

It is true that I have failed; but I am dead. And my responsibility, as a saved person, flows from this: that Christ has loved and saved me; and from the relations which exist between Him

and me. If my soul has not understood its responsibility before God as saved, I have not understood the gospel; nevertheless, I cannot deny it; God has revealed it to me. It is not any more a question of what I ought to be, but of what Christ has done, and done for me.

What I find is, that He has loved me as I was. I find in Jesus the manifestation of the God who loved me. I have the full assurance before God that I have no longer anything to do with this first life, the life of the first Adam; but that I live now in another life, communicated by the last Adam, even Christ, of whose love to me I am assured.

There is a great difference between the enjoyment of a lost child introduced into a family, and that of him who is adopted there. The child may find the father to be kind, but he has not yet the child's heart, nor position, as long as he feels himself a mere foundling. As soon, however, as his position is changed, because he understands that the head of the family is become his father by adoption, he enjoys those intimate relations which exist between a parent and his child.

Everything depends on the relations which exist. One cannot enjoy the affections of God without being His child; all depends on the knowledge and enjoyment of this relationship. Then the heart is happy.

And such is the place of the Christian. The effect of Christ's work is to set us thus in the relation in which Jesus stands with the Father.

The apostle presents us with a second position in Galatians iii. 2 : "Received ye the Spirit by the

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works of the law or by the hearing of faith? ”

To this he replies : “As many [persons] as are of the works of the law are under the curse : for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” . . . “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Now we have the contrast, not only with the law, but also with the promises; for Christ is far above the promises, seeing that He is Himself their accomplishment. Those who are of the works of the law (on that ground and principle) are cursed; those who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. (Gal. iii. 9.)

Impossible to have joy in God's presence without the question of sins being settled. Can we stand before God with that?

No; righteousness is necessary. If I have the least thing upon my conscience, how can I be happy in the light? For one must be there without spot.

But Christ has done more than answer to righteousness; and herein we find a glorious manifestation in Christ, for He has accomplished, in perfection, all that was demanded of man; and He is now glorified. We enjoy not merely the righteousness which was required, but this : that God has been glorified; and this is much more. Had God merely shown Himself just, He would have cut off all men as sinners. Without the work of Christ, God's majesty would have been compromised; but Christ gave Himself up to be

the vessel for displaying on the cross all that God is for us. God Himself has been so glorified, that Christ could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me." (John x. 17.)

The God-man has not only satisfied the righteousness of God, but, besides, the consequence of His perfect work is that we can rejoice in His presence without questions and without trouble of conscience. We have received not life only but the Holy Ghost as the seal of our justification, and in order that we may understand all the effect of this righteousness to enjoy it without a cloud in the Father's presence.

Another thing besides flows thence, the base on which the Church is founded. For this is not on what man was not, but on what he is in Christ; and in this manifestation Christ has unfolded all that was in God for us. The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Tim. iii. 15.) *There* is the truth, because God has been "manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up in glory."

This had not been all promised. For the Church to receive her existence, it was needful that God should be manifested in flesh. Christ having accomplished the work of redemption, God has introduced man into His presence, and set him in glory. Having proved man to be a sinner, He was not contented to take away sin, but He would see him His own, and make him enjoy all His grace in perfect peace, giving him to understand that His righteousness was accomplished in Christ.

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Such is the Church.

Souls convinced of sin enjoy all the fulness of the sovereign grace of God, because there is no more question of sins for them. By the gift of the Holy Ghost this effect is produced; there is the consciousness of the perfect righteousness of God Himself without conscience of sins.

Can you say that there is no more question of sins for you? Is this question entirely at rest, and your relation to God founded on that? Have you recognized that your responsibility, your relation with God, is based upon the accomplished righteousness in Christ?

If so, you are happy and blessed. Formerly you were sinners; but now you can say, God loves me. I do not speak of your thoughts; but you have made the discovery that you are God's children by faith in Christ Jesus, that your responsibility as sinners is closed. (Gal. iii. 26.)

Are your hearts thus at large, to consider before Him that you are crucified with Christ, and that sin is gone for you? I cannot have the feelings of a bride towards one whom I dread as my judge. I need the consciousness of being in the presence of my bridegroom according to that lovingkindness which is better than life.

Is God your daily resource in your faults and sins, even when you have committed them? Do you believe that His love can do that?

There is where the apostle regards the Christian as set; and, when the contrary happens, the Jewish position is more or less taken by the heart. If I have not full confidence in God, I must seek something outside, instead of having recourse to God to find strength, and to restore my soul.

If God is your resource, you will not seek the law. The touch-stone for the child of God, is whether his resources are in God or in himself. Perhaps, like the Jews, he seeks to offer sacrifices. If Christians, we are under grace, and it is of moment for us to be clear as to the position Christ has brought us into. There we are blessed in His presence; there also we are in possession of the precious things which are promised us. For, I repeat, it is not the promises which constitute our joy, but Christ, in whom we have them all Yea, and Amen, in virtue of the work which has been wrought and accepted; and we can be strangers and pilgrims. (2 Cor. i. 20; Heb. xiii. 13.)

May God strengthen us more and more in the consciousness of His love, which has saved us, and which brings us into His presence to enjoy all that He is for us. Then Christ will be the object of all our thoughts.

May we have it simple and settled before us that it is no more ourselves that live but Christ that lives in us; that nothing is wanting to the accomplishment of the requirements of God; and that our position is based upon His love.

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The way to be preserved from sinning is to be full of Christ. If my heart be full of Christ evil cannot come in. Satan has nothing to do with the new man; therefore if any one keepeth himself, that wicked one toucheth him not. (1 John v. 18.)

## **Meditations on the First Epistle of John.**

### IX.

**N**OW the nature of God being love, when He set about to manifest it He did it perfectly. It would be impossible for love to be more entire in its expression, "for God sent His only begotten Son," etc. God as it were lifts up His love before you in its form of perfectness, its meridian glory; and here the Spirit loves to linger.

We have in vv. 9, 10, two different aspects of this love; first, that the Son is given, that we might live through Him; second, that He might be the propitiation for our sins. If we read John vi., we find that life comes out of sacrifice. There is no life but in feeding on the slain Lamb. Here we have the two aspects severally given. In the Gospel it is seen that there is no life but in death; sin is put away by the death of Christ.

It will never give me life to look on the Lord Jesus as an example. He is that, but how am I to get rid of my sins? There is no life but by the death that puts away sin, and therefore the voice of Christ links death with sacrifice.

There is another thought on this tenth verse. Love in God is self-originating; it is not so in us. In God, love is an emanation of nature; in you, love is an emanation of the divine nature, not of your own nature; no, not even when you get it from God. And this is the contrast, that when we compare our love with the love of God, ours is as nothing. How He outshines us! Nothing moved Him to love but His own nature. No attraction of ours based the history of the cross of

Christ. Its foundation lay in the divine nature. We find this in *v.* 10. We never drew out the love of God; it flowed out spontaneously, and this gift of the Son was the expression of it.

The word in verse 11 is humbling, very humbling, but very precious. Love in us, is matter of exhortation; it is not so with God. Let me say it, Who could exhort Him? Ah! but He has no rival nature: "God is love." In you there is the rival nature; and there, though you be participant in the divine nature, you need an exhortation to love your brother. Love is God's nature; but I am a complete creature, morally composed of principles of love and hatred; and I am therefore the proper subject of the exhortation in *v.* 11.

We have anticipated verse 12. It teaches us not to sit as scholars, but as worshippers in the presence of the divine glory, that impenetrable veil. "No man hath seen God at any time." (John i. 18.)

Jesus said, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." (John vi. 46.) When Jesus says this, we can say, "Thou hast seen the Father; Thou hast been in the secret of that light impenetrable to all save Thyself; the light that no man can approach unto." Jesus was in that light which was impenetrable to creation; and if He had not been God, He could not have been there. (1 Tim. vi. 16; Col. i. 15.)

Now, if we love one another, we are partakers of the Spirit; and if we are partakers of the Spirit, we have the nature of God. God dwelleth in us by His Spirit.

And by the light of this new nature God is revealed in perfect love, and we can "testify that



the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." (v. 14.)

God has through Christ a twofold connection with this world. He has a connection with this world because of Christ; demanding, as another has said, "What have you done with my Son?"

God asked of Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" What has the world done with Jesus? This is the controversy.

But again, salvation is come through Christ; God has sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Wonderful it is to see these things all clustering round Christ.

We have the text of confession of Christ as a proof of the indwelling Spirit. (v. 15.) To be sure we have.

What said Jesus to Peter? "Whom do men say that I am?"

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," was the confession of Peter himself. That is not a revelation of flesh and blood, it is the revelation of the Father.

So he that confesses that Jesus is the Christ, dwelleth in God, and God in him. It is a direct, personal dealing with the soul by the Father of lights, this revelation, which carries the knowledge of the Son into the heart.

The Spirit delights to linger here; and, to speak as a man, we must excuse Him for it. He has reached the highest heights, and He cannot but linger there.

You think there is repetition? Be it so; it is repetition ever grateful to our ears. The Divine Spirit speaks of the divine nature. He tarries, and invites us to tarry with Him.

If I can look in the face of Jesus of Nazareth,

and say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," can that be accounted for otherwise than by perfect love? It is well to have this re-asserted, for where do you dwell but in love? Can you dwell in power? Never! The throne may have power, but love has a bosom! John could rest on the bosom of Jesus, and we in eternal love. Nowhere but in eternal love! Nowhere but in love find a home! (v. 16.) Our communion is in the apprehension of love. Our communion is not with God as a Judge, but as Love. And we are conscious of relationship.

We have *love with* us, and *love in* us. (v. 17; margin.) Here it is "with us," and perfect, if we love one another. A poor perfection, indeed, if compared with the love of God, though good enough for poor creatures; a perfection far outshone (v. 12). Perfection in us is a poor thing when compared to perfection in God (v. 17); which gives those who were His enemies boldness to stand before Him in the day of judgment, with an answer for every demand of the throne. That is the gospel! Grace has made provision whereby a rebel can stand in the judgment with an answer in his mouth. *I love my brethren!* No thanks to me. Ah! how the divine nature outshines me! I defy your imagination to conceive anything finer. The offended God provides His rebel creatures with an answer to His own demands! We see this in Noah, Egypt, and Rahab.

And now what have we to do with judgment? We can measure it, for our righteousness is resplendent as the throne itself. Righteousness is seated on the throne, and the very same righteousness has invested me; for if Christ is the

righteousness of God, He is my righteousness also. (1 Cor. i. 20; 2 Cor. v. 21.) This righteousness is on me; so I can challenge the throne in my person. The throne has righteousness; so have I. So instead of a controversy we have communion; we have fellowship, for we have the same glory—Christ. As a matter of course, then, we have boldness in the day of judgment.

In verse 10 you have the underived love of God. In you love is derived, and there was nothing in you to attract love but your misery.

Verse 19 shows this love in you is only a reflection; it is but a response. In God love originated, and this is well. It is well that the glory of the creation should be co-ordinate with the glory of the Creator. Well we may excuse these varied echoes of truth. The first speaks of place in God for you.

The brother is supposed to be a reflection of Christ. (v. 20.) He is not looked at by the Spirit in his own muddy, turbid condition, but as a reflection of God. Now, if you do not love the reflection, how can you love the original?

It is not a mere exhortation, but a command to love. (v. 21.) The commandment makes the right thing the obedient thing. Suppose you love without minding the commandment; you are doing the right thing, but not the obedient thing.

Having ascended from the person to the nature, we here find commands suited to that nature as communicated to us. And we find a rest and a dwelling-place for the eternal satisfaction of the heart. We are introduced to His glory in His Son, we glory in it; we hear of His moral character, and find it all manifested in Jesus.

You will remember our having referred to the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Lord sealed this truth in Peter's soul, and He seals it still to the very heart of every believing sinner. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 16, 17.)

This is the simple but important history of the truth, whether given or revealed. It is the revelation of the Father written in the heart of the sinner; not by inbred power, but by distinct revelation. This is the origin of all life amongst us; it comes from "the Father of lights." "Who-soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (v.1.) The confession of Christ is the fruit of the Father's revelation, it is the exhibition of that which comes from the Father.

Is there anything you would prefer to this? Would you rather that you should discover Christ by the exercise of your own intelligence? The scholarship of man comes by his own intellect. The knowledge of Christ comes by light from without and light within. It is a double revelation. If there were a candle burning on the table, what should I be the better if I had not an eye in my head? The candle may shine, but, if I am blind, I am in the dark still. I want an eye in my body. There is a double action required, the object without and the faculty for observing it within; and both these are from the Father.

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When the word of God reaches the heart it proves itself. I do not need to judge it; it judges me. (Heb. iv. 12, 13.)

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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).

Sacrifice and Priesthood.

THE sinner needs a sacrifice; the believer needs a priest. We have both the one and the other in Christ, who, having offered Himself without spot to God, entered upon the sphere of His priestly ministry in the sanctuary above. (Heb. iv. 14; ix. 24.)

We need no other sacrifice, no other priest. Jesus is divinely sufficient. He imparts the dignity and worth of His own Person to every office He sustains and to every work He performs. When we see Him as a sacrifice we know that we have in Him all that a perfect sacrifice could be; and when we see Him as a priest we know that every function of the priesthood is perfectly discharged by Him. As a sacrifice, He introduces His people into a settled relationship with God; and as a priest He maintains them therein according to the perfectness of what He is.

Priesthood is designed for those who already stand in a certain relationship with God. Once sinners, by nature and by practice, "far off" from God, we are as believers "made nigh" by the blood of Christ." (Eph. ii. 13.) We are brought into an established relationship with Him. We stand before Him as the fruit of His own work. He has put away our sins in such a manner as suits Himself, so that we might be before Him, to the praise of His name, as the exhibition of what He can accomplish through the power of the death and resurrection of Christ.

But though so fully delivered from everything that could be against us; though so perfectly accepted in the Beloved; though so complete in Christ; though so highly exalted, yet are we in ourselves, while down here, poor feeble creatures, ever prone to wander, ready to stumble, exposed to manifold temptations, trials and snares. As such we need the ceaseless ministry of our "Great High Priest," whose very presence in the sanctuary above maintains us in the full integrity of that place and relationship in which through grace we stand. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." (Heb. vii. 25.) We could not stand for a moment down here if He were not living for us up there. "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. v. 10.)

The "death" and the "life" are inseparably connected in the economy of grace. But, be it observed, the life comes after the death. It is Christ's life as risen from the dead, and not His life down here that the apostle refers to in the

last quoted passage. This distinction is eminently worthy of the reader's attention. The life of our blessed Lord Jesus, while down here, was, I need hardly remark, infinitely precious; but He did not enter upon His sphere of priestly service until He had accomplished the work of redemption. Nor could He have done so, inasmuch as "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." (Heb. vii. 14.) "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this Man have somewhat also to offer. For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." (Heb. viii. 3, 4). "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. . . . For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. ix. 11, 12, 24.)

Heaven, not earth, is the sphere of Christ's priestly ministry; and on that sphere He entered when He had offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. ix. 14). He never appeared as a priest in the temple below. He oft-times went up to the temple to teach, but never to sacrifice or burn incense. There never was any one ordained of God to discharge the functions of the priestly office on earth save Aaron and his sons. "If He were on earth, He should not be a priest." This is a

point of much interest and value in connection with the doctrine of priesthood. Heaven is the sphere, and accomplished redemption the basis of Christ's priesthood.

Except in the sense that all believers are priests (1 Peter ii. 5), there is no such thing as a priest upon earth. Unless a man can show his descent from Aaron, unless he can trace his pedigree up to that ancient source, he has no right to exercise the priestly office. Apostolic succession itself, could it be proved, would be of no possible value here, inasmuch as the apostles themselves were not priests, save in the sense above referred to, that is, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The feeblest member of the household of faith is as much a priest as the apostle Peter himself. He is a spiritual priest; he worships in a spiritual temple; he stands at a spiritual altar; he offers a spiritual sacrifice; he is clad in spiritual vestments. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter ii. 5.) "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. xiii. 15, 16.)

If one of the direct descendants of the house of Aaron was converted to Christ, he would enter upon an entirely new character and ground of priestly service. And be it observed that the passages just quoted present the two great classes of spiritual sacrifice which the spiritual priest is privileged to offer. There is the sacrifice of praise to God, and the sacrifice of benevolence to man.

SACRIFICE AND PRIESTHOOD.

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There is a double stream continually going forth from the believer who is living in the realisation of his priestly place; a stream of grateful praise ascending to the throne of God, and a stream of active benevolence flowing forth to a needy world. The spiritual priest stands with one hand lifted up to God, in the presentation of the incense of grateful praise; and the other opened wide to minister in genuine beneficence to every form of human need.

Were these things more distinctly apprehended, what hallowed elevation and what moral grace would they not impart to the Christian character; elevation, inasmuch as the heart would ever be lifted up to the infinite Source of all that is capable of elevating; moral grace, inasmuch as the heart would ever be kept open to all demands upon its sympathies.

The two things are inseparable. Immediate occupation of heart with God must of necessity elevate and enlarge. But, on the other hand, if one walks at a distance from God, the heart will become grovelling and contracted. Intimacy of communion with God, the habitual realisation of our priestly dignity, is the only effectual remedy for the downward and selfish tendencies of the old nature.

If Jesus takes up the disciples to see the glory of the kingdom, and the entrance of the saints into the excellent glory where the Father was, He came down also, and met the crowd of this world, and the power of Satan, where we have to walk. (Luke ix. 31, 37-39.)

The Christian's Connection with the New Creation.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS v. 13-21.

IT is blessed to see in this chapter how the thought of God comes out in the New Creation. In this aspect *man is gone* as to his sins and responsibility, dead in them. The judgment of the first Adam is complete. The old thing is entirely gone.

It is a "new creation" now, and, in this "new creation" I find God instead of man (v. 17). Even Christ Himself, as known after the flesh, is known no more. True, He was, when down here, the hope and expectation of faith as coming into the world. But the apostle only knows Him now as having died for all, and being glorified; all are under death, whether Jew or Gentile, and Christ no more known after the flesh; that is, as come after the hopes of man in it; but Head of a new creation, where all things are of God, and in which we have been made "in Him" the righteousness of God (v. 21). God has manifested Himself in the second Man, and wrought atonement in His death, and now we are "the righteousness of God in Him."

In the first creation we see man and his responsibility. In the new creation all things are of God, and man is reconciled by Jesus Christ unto Himself. We want to have the power of this in our souls to live as belonging to the new creation, as reconciled by God to Himself, all that belonged to the old creation for ever gone to faith: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (v. 17).

THE NEW CREATION.

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We see in verse 13 how the apostle walked in the power of this: "Whether," he says, "we be beside ourselves, it is to God." That is, if he were beyond the influences that belonged to him as a man, it was not an excitement that belongs to these influences; it was because he was absorbed in God. It is what is called ecstasy. When his spirit was free to rise above present service in what he was in Christ, he was lost in God, carried out beyond himself.

If he were sober, if he had to weigh difficulties, come down into the sober estimate of what was before him, it was God in love working in him. His thought was entirely for others in that love.

This was his daily life; as to himself, transported with God; and, when he did think about things down here, all his thoughts were for others.

It was "the love of Christ" that constrained him; and he looked upon all around in connection with the death of Christ. It was no longer a living Messiah in the flesh with promises for Israel. All this was over. Christ had died; and Paul judged that Christ would not have gone into death, if men had not been there. The whole history of Adam's race is closed in death. If they had not all been dead, Christ would not have been found in death. Why have gone down there if others were not lying there? And, therefore, those who from amongst these lived, were now to live not to themselves, but to Christ, who died for them, and rose again (v. 15).

Thus, if he met an unconverted man, he would not think of him as an old acquaintance, and know him as such; he would look upon

him as one that was dead, and needed to be saved by the death of Christ. Or if the person were a Christian, it would be just the same; he would not know him after the flesh, according to an old acquaintance with him; he would look upon him as one alive with Christ, and his one thought would be that Christ might be glorified in him.

Even Christ Himself was not to be known any more in connection with this creation. He had died to it; and if any man is in Christ, he is of the "new creation," where "old things are passed away, and all things are become new, and all things are of God." Man is looked upon as dead, and God brings in a new creation.

We have the same aspect of truth when, in the nineteenth verse, he speaks of Christ's coming in the flesh. It is not looked upon as fulfilling promises to Israel, but God revealing Himself in grace to the world: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (v. 19). This was the aspect of Christ's first coming, in which the apostle thought of Him.

We know "He came unto His own," and "was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." (John i. 11; Rom. xvi. 8.) All this is blessedly true; but here we have God in man come here, and the apostle sees neither Jew nor Gentile. If God were in Christ, He acts towards the *world* (v. 19). To what portion of it can you confine Him, if it be a question of God displaying Himself in grace in the world? For the same reason, when Paul speaks of the love of Christ, he judges all to be dead, and sees neither Jew nor

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Gentile, but a new creation, in which God accounts every man that is in Christ.

We know that that is God as to the glory of His divine Person, but the apostle is speaking here historically; and therefore when he looks upon the Lord Jesus living in the world, he sees God in Him acting in overtures of grace to the world. "God *was* in Christ"; that is the great fact, that God has been here as the Reconciler; and man would not be reconciled.

Does the apostle say that God is reconciling us? No, but that God "*has* reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the word of reconciliation" (v. 18). We are made the righteousness of God in Christ; and now we go out with the word of reconciliation to the world. Specially, no doubt, the apostles, but in their measure true of all believers.

Man would not have God when He came; and therefore He had to make Christ sin, to work atonement for us; and now He is at God's right hand, in whom we become the righteousness of God.

The apostle does not say to the Corinthians, Be ye reconciled, for they *were* reconciled; but Christ being in heaven, having gone there through death in working out atonement for us. and His presence there being necessary to complete all in glory, He must have ambassadors to carry out His word of reconciliation here. So the apostle says, when he preaches, that is, the gospel to sinners, "We pray in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." That is what he had to say to men as Christ's ambassador (v. 20).

How far are we living thus; living in the

power of God's new creation; judging the whole thing belonging to the first creation as gone to faith, and entering into the blessedness of our place in Christ in the power of an ungrieved Spirit; exercised for others, that the life of Christ may have power in their walk and ways; judging evil practically in our own path through the world; but yet having our souls so full of our blessedness in Christ, of what it is to be reconciled to God, that directly opportunity arises our hearts burst forth in praises to God, and ever go forth after others still dead in their sins?

That this may be so practically, we must bring the death of Christ to judge everything in ourselves and in our ways. As the apostle says before: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Cor. iv. 10). If we do not daily and hourly bring everything under the sentence of Christ's death, and judge everything by it, the Spirit will be grieved in us, and, instead of filling us with the joy of our portion in Christ, He will cause the light of Christ to awaken us to the judgment of ourselves and of our ways.

May the Lord give us to walk in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, bringing everything into subjection to Christ, that we may know what the apostle went on to speak of: "Death worketh in us, but life in you." (iv. 12.) In thus bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, Paul found death to self; and the result was life to the Corinthians. Paul held the power of Christ's death on the natural man, so that when he ministered among the Corinthians there was no Paul at all, but only Christ. It was "life"

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to them because "death" was working in Paul.

May the Lord give us thus to live. And may He grant us, especially in a day like this, to judge of men as Paul did, so that whatever the boast of human nature may be, we may see that all are dead, because Christ died for all in grace; for the highest act of grace and love is the proof of it; and that the only living ones are they that live to Him, "who died for them, and rose again," while in our own souls we enter into His new creation. We may have to go down to babes, and feed them with milk, and not with strong meat; but may we ourselves live in the light of this new creation, where "all things are of God."

We must pass through exercise, and be tried and tested to learn what is in our hearts, and to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil. This is all needful and profitable; but then there is our distinct place in Christ, as part of the new creation, where, instead of having the first man responsible to God, we have God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself in grace, and making Christ sin for us to bring us into this new creation, where all things are of God, and where man is before God in divine righteousness, and, as to his enjoyment, finding himself lost in God.

It is God, and not man. It is what God is to man, and the blessedness of man being with God. God, we know, revealed in Christ; but nevertheless God revealed, and man made the righteousness of God, a part of God's New Creation.

Everything on which the hopes of the flesh are founded shall disappear for ever.

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

X.

NOW, the more thoroughly I see my debtorship the happier I shall be. I am a poor, dark, impotent sinner. Let me read in this, first, my debtorship to the Father. If I do believe that "Jesus is the Christ," it is because I am "born of God." It is no modification of my own old nature, but a new thing by revelation of "the Father of lights." (v. 1.)

And here, again, we have the Levitical marks of the clean animal. The law made a difference between clean and unclean. They were distinguished by the form of the hoof, etc. So it is in this epistle. We have the marks of love and obedience. This is a moral testimony to my title, and I would not refuse it. I would not refuse to have my title tried by moral tests. Could power of intellect satisfy me? Let me have the proofs of love and obedience.

We have a weighty truth brought out here: we may leave out the word "for." "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." (v. 4.) Yes, it does, and it does so by divine necessity.

Let me ask you two things: Was the devil ever a conqueror? Was God ever defeated? Never! You may lay this up for your comfort, that the devil has never conquered, and that God has never been defeated.

It becomes, therefore, a divine necessity that that which is of God is a conqueror; always in victory. You may be a very different instrument from your Lord! He could say, "I have over-

come the world." (John xvi. 33.) You can but say, "My faith has overcome." Faith in you does what Jesus did in His own person; but faith can do it, and it is blessed to be brought into the light of this comfortable truth.

I do not deny that Satan gets advantage over us too often; but all advantages do but return to his own confusion. And when Satan seemed to have the victory, when Jesus was under death for a moment, what was it but to give to Jesus the more splendid victory? He was indeed as truly dead as ever man was, and in a worse view, as being under judgment; but only that He might gain the third day's victory. If Christ appeared to be conquered, it but set forth His victories. If Satan seems to conquer, it is but for his own confusion.

The thing that is born of God is the power of God in you, gaining divine victories, because it is of God. New and magnificent truth! I find myself part of that mighty thing which is sent into the battle-field confident of victory. The flesh must be made a show of; but that which I possess from God is a principle of victory.

The Holy Ghost is a Conqueror too, "because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." (iv. 4.) He that is in the world is the spirit of darkness. God is the God of victory. Let me be humbled, that God may be magnified. This lesson must be learned; it may be taught severely to some, and gently to others; but whether by gentleness or severity, we must learn our own good-for-nothingness.

Verse 5 is a glorious truth! It is by dependence we get the victory, by dependence on Jesus. There are two victories which I have share in;

one in communion, the other in power. I share with Christ the victory over the world, and the victory over death. "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. xv. 54.)

But when we come to the victory over judgment, we must stand aside, and receive it at Christ's hands. Had you anything to say to the putting away of sin? You know you had not; you are a debtor. Stand by, gaze, and worship at what Christ has done.

And now you are called to victory. You must be made a fool of, but you carry the power of God. You possess that which is victory over the world! Ah! we want large thoughts. God's thoughts are very large, though He confines them within the nutshell of a single text. Large they are and abundant. We want accuracy, too; we want to learn a lesson from our own inaccuracy.

Now we are taught how to use the instruments of victory. (v. 6). If I admit that Jesus is the Son of God, let me use this truth. So to speak, let me show a little of this mettle. If Jesus be the instrument of victory, use Him. Lean, lean with all your weight of sins upon His blood; lean heavily. His object in coming here was to cleanse you from your crimson sins; He came not by water only, but also by blood. He could not give you communion but by atoning for your lost condition. Then use Christ.

Oh! what a grasp of Him we thus get! A full Christ, very Man and very God; very Man, as one of us, yet God blessed for ever! This is a full Christ. He came into this world to make, by His blood, a full provision for sin, and to keep the soul in communion by the washing of

water. God and Man in one, He works by water and blood.

This epistle truly demands that we should linger over every word. We might well do it in Ephesians and other epistles; but here it is imperative, and that because I find myself alone with Christ. I do not care if I be the only saint on earth; for it is to one in such a place of solitude that this writing is addressed. I do not say my heart would not feel it; it ought to feel more than if one were alone. But here I am, as it were, insulated, and this is an immense comfort amidst confusion; *I am blessed*, and *I bless Him*. Yes! The more the confusion presses, the more the consolation rises.

I believe that if the Spirit had written these words which we have in verse 7 He would have said "The Son," and not "The Word." "The Word" is an official title; Jesus is the personal title. John is the only one who calls Jesus "The Word." It is well chosen, and speaks of Jesus as the revealer of the mind of God, as your word reveals your mind. Again, as one has said. "I cannot understand why a record should be wanting in heaven." I agree with those who reject this verse 7.

Verse 8 should be read in the light of John xix., xx. When Jesus died, blood and water came out of His side; and when risen He imparted the Holy Ghost to His disciples. In the mouth of these three witnesses is your title established. The blood and water from the crucified Jesus justifies you from sin. The Spirit of the risen Jesus imparts life to you. Cleansed, washed, and justified by blood, you have life by the Spirit. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The

law itself received the testimony of three witnesses; on these three your title rests secure. Your mind's working may give you trouble; but have you read your title clear? Christ having cleansed you by water and by blood, appears in risen power to fill you with an eternal treasure!

"If we receive the witness of men." (v. 9.) And do we not do this? Of course we do; we dare not but do it. Do you question your friend's veracity? Will you not take his witness? "The witness of God is greater." God had expended His measure of testimony on man when He had given the blood and water of a crucified Christ, and the Spirit of a risen Christ. There are His three witnesses.

There are three ways in which God has presented life to His creatures. There are His elect angels, who kept their first state; in them He *maintained* life. To Adam He *committed* life as a stewardship. Adam lost it. In neither of these ways have you life, neither supported or deposited, but by *derivation*. You are not independent of a source of life outside you; your life is in Christ, and is therefore infallible; yes, infallible in the risen Jesus. It is better than Adam's or than an angel's life, for it is life out of death! Life eternal in its quality. And now would you exchange with Adam or the angels? Would you wish life were committed to your stewardship? Oh, what it is to derive life from Christ!

The world for the Christian is now a great Rephidim. (Exodus xvii. 1.)

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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).

"They Sang His Praise."

(Read Exodus xv.; Psalm cvi. 7-12.)

THIS chapter opens with Israel's magnificent song of triumph on the shores of the Red Sea, when they had seen "that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians." They had seen God's salvation, and they therefore sing His praise, and recount His mighty acts. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord."

Up to this moment, we have not had so much as a single note of praise. We have heard their cry of deep sorrow, as they toiled amid the brick-kilns of Egypt; we have hearkened to their cry of unbelief, when surrounded by what they deemed insuperable difficulties; but until now we have had no song of praise. It was not until,

as a saved people, they found themselves surrounded by the fruits of God's salvation, that the triumphal hymn burst forth from the whole redeemed assembly. It was when they emerged from their significant baptism "in the cloud and in the sea," and were able to gaze upon the rich spoils of victory which lay scattered around them, that six hundred thousand voices were heard chanting the song of victory. The waters of the Red Sea rolled between them and Egypt, and they stood on the shore as a fully delivered people, and therefore they were able to praise Jehovah.

In this, as in everything else, they were our types. We too must know ourselves as saved, in the power of death and resurrection, before ever we can present clear and intelligent worship. There will always be reserve and hesitancy in the soul, proceeding, no doubt, from positive inability to enter into the accomplished redemption which is in Christ Jesus. There may be the acknowledgment of the fact that there is salvation in Christ, and in none other; but this is a very different thing from apprehending by faith the true character and ground of that salvation, and realizing it as ours.

It is the privilege of the very feeblest member of the Church of God to know that he was represented by Christ on the cross; that all his sins were confessed, borne, judged, and atoned for there. This is a divine reality, and when laid hold of by faith must give peace. But nothing short of it ever can give peace. There may be earnest, anxious, and most sincere desires after God. There may be the most pious and devout attendance upon all the ordinances, offices, and

forms of religion. But there is no other possible way in which to get the sense of sin entirely removed from the conscience, but seeing it judged in the Person of Christ, as a sin-offering on the cursed tree. If it was judged there once for all, it is now by the believer to be regarded as a divinely, and therefore eternally, settled question. And that it was so judged is proved by the resurrection of the Surety. (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.)

While it is generally admitted that all this is true in reference to the Church collectively, many find considerable difficulty in making a personal application thereof. They are ready to say, with the psalmist, “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped.” (Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2.)

They are looking at themselves in death, instead of at Christ in resurrection. They are occupied rather with their appropriation of Christ than with Christ Himself. They are thinking of their capacity rather than their title. Thus they are kept in a state of the most distressing uncertainty, and as a consequence they are never able to take the place of happy, intelligent worshippers. They are praying for salvation, instead of rejoicing in the conscious possession of it. They are looking at their imperfect fruits, instead of Christ's perfect atonement.

In looking through the various parts of this song in Exodus xv., we do not find a single note about self, its doings, its sayings, its feelings, or its fruits. It is all about Jehovah from beginning to end. It begins with, “I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.”

This is a specimen of the entire song. It is a simple record of the attributes and actings of Jehovah.

In chapter xiv. the hearts of the people had, as it were, been pent up by the excessive pressure of their circumstances; but in chapter xv. the pressure is removed, and their hearts find full vent in a sweet song of praise. Self is forgotten. Circumstances are lost sight of. One object, and but one, fills their vision, and that object is the Lord Himself in His character and ways. They were able to say, "Thou Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work; I will triumph in the works of Thy hands." (Ps. xcii. 4.)

This is true worship. It is when poor worthless self, with all its belongings, is lost sight of, and Christ alone fills the heart, that we present proper worship. There is no need for the efforts of a feeble pietism to awaken in the soul feelings of devotion. Nor is there any demand whatever for the adventitious appliances of religion, so called, to kindle in the soul the flame of acceptable worship. Oh! no; let but the heart be occupied with the person of Christ, and "songs of praise" will be the natural result. It is impossible for the eye to rest on Him, and the spirit not be bowed in holy worship.

If we contemplate the worship of the hosts which surround the throne of God and the Lamb, we shall find that it is ever evoked by the presentation of some special feature of divine excellence or divine acting. (Rev. iv., v., vii., xi., etc.) Thus should it be with the Church on earth; and when it is not so, it is because we allow things to intrude upon us which have no place in the regions of unclouded light and unalloyed

blessedness. In all true worship, God Himself is at once the object of worship, the subject of worship, and the power of worship.

Accordingly Exodus xv. is a fine specimen of a song of praise. It is the language of a redeemed people celebrating the worthy praise of Him who had redeemed them. Its language is : “The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation; He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name . . . Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy . . . Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? . . . 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 Lord shall reign for ever and ever.”

How comprehensive is the range of this song ! It begins with redemption, and ends with the glory. It begins with the cross, and ends with the kingdom. It is like a beauteous rainbow, of which one end dips in “the sufferings of Christ” and the other in “the glory which should follow.” (1 Pet. i. 11.) It is all about Jehovah. It is an outpouring of the soul produced by an enlightened view of God and His gracious and glorious actings.

Nor does it stop short of the actual accomplishment of the divine purpose; as we read, “Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.” The people were able to say this, though they had but just planted their

foot on the margin of the desert. It was not the expression of a vague hope. It was not depending upon poor blind chance. Oh! no; when the soul is wholly occupied with God, it is enabled to launch out into all the fulness of His grace, to bask in the sunshine of His countenance, and delight itself in the rich abundance of His mercy and loving-kindness. There is not a cloud upon the prospect when the believing soul, taking its stand upon the eternal rock on which redeeming love has set it in association with a risen Christ, looks up into the spacious vault of God's infinite plans and purposes, and dwells upon the effulgence of that glory which God has prepared for all those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. vii. 14.)

This will account for the peculiarly brilliant, elevated, and unqualified character of all those bursts of praise which we find throughout Sacred Scripture. The creature is set aside; God is the object. He fills the entire sphere of the soul's vision. There is nothing of man, his feelings, or his experiences, and therefore the stream of praise flows forth copiously and uninterruptedly. How different is this from some of the hymns which we so often hear sung in Christian assemblies, so full of our failings, our feebleness, our shortcomings. The fact is, we can never sing with real, spiritual intelligence and power when we are looking at ourselves. We shall ever be discovering something within which will act as a drawback to our worship. Indeed, with many it seems to be accounted a Christian grace to be in a continual state of doubt and hesitation; and, as a consequence, their hymns are quite in

character with their condition. Such persons, however sincere and pious, have not yet, in the actual experience of their souls, entered upon the proper ground of worship. They have not yet got done with themselves. They have not passed through the sea; and, as a spiritually baptized people, taken their stand on the shore, in the power of resurrection. They are still, in some way or another, occupied with self. They do not regard self as a crucified thing, with which God is for ever done. (Gal. ii. 10.)

May the Holy Ghost lead all God's people into fuller, clearer, and worthier apprehensions of their place and privilege as those who, being washed from their sins in the blood of Christ, are presented before God in all that infinite and unclouded acceptance in which He stands, as the risen and glorified Head of His Church. Doubts and fears do not become them, for their divine Surety has not left a shadow of a foundation on which to build a doubt or fear. Their place is within the veil. They “have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” (Heb. x. 19.) Are there any doubts or fears in “the holiest”? Is it not evident that a doubting spirit virtually calls in question the perfectness of Christ's work, a work which has been attested, in the view of all created intelligences, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead? That blessed One could not have left the tomb unless all ground of doubting and fearing had been perfectly removed on behalf of His people. Wherefore, it is the Christian's sweet privilege ever to triumph in a full salvation. The Lord Himself has become His salvation; and he has only to enjoy the fruits of that which God has wrought

for him, and to walk to His praise while waiting for that time when "Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever."

There is one note in this song to which I shall invite my reader's particular attention: "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation." (v. 2.)

It is worthy of note that when the heart is full to overflowing with the joy of redemption, it gives expression to its devoted purpose in reference to a "habitation for God." Let the Christian reader ponder this. God dwelling with man is a grand thought pervading Scripture from Exodus xv. to Revelation. Hearken to the following utterance of a devoted heart: "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." (Ps. cxxxii. 3-5.) Again, "For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." (Ps. lxxix. 9; John ii. 17.)

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; and they went out into the wilderness of Shur: and they went three days into the wilderness, and found no water." (v. 22.) It is when we get into wilderness experience that we are put to the test as to the real measure of our acquaintance with God and with our own hearts. There is a freshness and an exuberance of joy connected with the opening of our Christian career which very soon receives a check from the keen blast of the desert; and then, unless there is a deep sense of what God is to us, above and beyond everything else, we are apt to break down, and "in our hearts turn back again into Egypt." The discip-

line of the wilderness is needful, not to furnish us with a title to Canaan, but to make us acquainted with God and with our own hearts; to enable us to enter into the power of our own relationship, and to enlarge our capacity for the enjoyment of Canaan when we actually get there (Deut. viii. 2-5.)

The greenness, freshness and luxuriance of Spring have peculiar charms, which pass away before the scorching heat of Summer; but then, with proper care, that very heat which removes the fair traces of Spring, produces the mellowed and matured fruits of Autumn. Thus it is also in the Christian life; for there is, as we know, a striking and deeply instructive analogy between the principles which obtain in the kingdom of nature and those which characterize the kingdom of grace, seeing it is the same God whose handiwork meets our view in both.

There are three distinct positions in which we may contemplate Israel, namely, (1) in Egypt, (2) in the wilderness, and (3) in the land of Canaan. In all these they are our “types”; but we are in all three together. This may seem paradoxical, yet it is true.

As a matter of actual fact, we are in Egypt, surrounded by natural things, which are entirely adapted to the natural heart. But, inasmuch as we have been called by God’s grace into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ, we, according to the affection and desires of the new nature, necessarily find our place outside of all that which belongs to Egypt, (that is, the world in its natural state), and this causes us to taste of wilderness experience; or, in other words, it places us, as a matter of experience, in the wilderness.

The divine nature earnestly breathes after a different order of things, after a purer atmosphere than that with which we find ourselves surrounded, and thus it causes us to feel Egypt to be a moral desert.

Then inasmuch as in God's view we are eternally associated with Him who has passed right through into the heavenlies, and taken His seat there in triumph and majesty, it is our happy privilege to know ourselves, by faith, as sitting together "in Him" there. (Eph. ii.) So that although we are as to our bodies in Egypt, we are as to our experience in the wilderness, while at the same time faith conducts us in spirit into Canaan, and enables us to feed upon "the old corn of the land"; that is, upon Christ, not as One come down to earth merely, but as One gone back to heaven, and seated there in glory. (Josh. v. 11, 12; Mark xvi. 19; Heb. i. 3.)

The concluding verses of Exodus xv. show us Israel in the wilderness. Up to this point it seemed to them to be all fair sailing. Heavy judgments poured upon Egypt, but Israel perfectly exempt; the army of Egypt dead upon the sea-shore, but Israel in triumph. All this was well enough; but, alas! the aspect of things speedily changed. The notes of praise were soon exchanged for the accents of discontent. "When they came to Marah they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?"

Again: "The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of

Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” (Exod. xvi. 3.)

Here were the trials of the wilderness. “What shall we eat?” and, “What shall we drink?” The waters of Marah tested the heart of Israel, and developed their murmuring spirit; but the Lord showed them that there was no bitterness which He would not sweeten with the provision of His own grace. “And the Lord showed him a tree, which when he cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet; there He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them.” Beauteous figure this of Him who was, in infinite grace, cast into the bitter waters of death, in order that those waters might yield nought but sweetness to us for ever!

Verse 26 sets before us the momentous character of this first stage of God’s redeemed in the wilderness. We are in great danger, at this point, of falling into a fretful, impatient, murmuring spirit. The only remedy for this is to keep the eye steadily fixed on Jesus, “looking unto Jesus.” (Heb. xii. 2.) He, blessed be His name, ever manifests Himself according to the need of His people; and they, instead of complaining of their circumstances, should only make their circumstances an occasion for drawing afresh upon Him.

Thus it is that the wilderness ministers to our experience of what God is. It is a school in which we learn His patient grace and ample resources. “Forty years suffered He their

manners in the wilderness." (Acts xiii. 18). The spiritual mind will ever own that it is worth having bitter waters for God to sweeten. "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom. v. 3-5.)

However, the wilderness has its Elims as well as its Marahs; its wells and palm-trees, as well as its bitter waters. "And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and three-score and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters." (v. 27.) The Lord graciously and tenderly provides green spots in the desert for His journeying people; and though they are at best but oases, yet are they refreshing to the spirit and encouraging to the heart. The sojourn at Elim was eminently calculated to soothe the hearts of the people, and hush their murmurings. The grateful shade of its palm-trees, and the refreshing of its wells, came in sweetly and seasonably after the trial of Marah, and significantly set forth the precious virtues of that spiritual ministry which God provides for His people down here. "The twelve" and "the seventy" are numbers intimately associated with ministry. (Matt. x.; Acts vi. 1-4; Luke ix. 1, 2, x. 1.)

But Elim was not Canaan. Its wells and palm-trees were but foretastes of that happy land which lay beyond the bounds of the sterile desert on which the redeemed had just entered. It furnished refreshment, no doubt, but it was wilderness refreshment. It was only for a

passing moment, designed in grace to encourage their depressed spirits, and nerve them for their onward march to Canaan. Thus it is, as we know, with ministry in the Church. It is a gracious provision for our need, designed to refresh, strengthen, and encourage our hearts, "until we all come . . . to the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11-13.)

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

XI.

VERSE 10 is exceedingly characteristic of John's writings. Here we stand in individual connection independent of all else, Church or anything. It is very blessed to have companions on the rugged road, and many are the duties which we must perform, which isolation deprives us of doing, for we cannot do them if we are not in the right relationship.

Our life is not what we trace in angels, but derive from the glorious Head of Life.

John is a mighty writer. He deals with the mighty Son of God, and puts poor believing sinners with Him. If you do not believe you are a sinner, you make God a liar, just as Adam did. God spoke to Adam of death in a world of life, and Adam did not believe Him. God speaks to you of life in a dead world, and if you do not believe His record you make Him a liar. The Spirit is dealing with realities. God can bear with and comfort the feeble-minded, but if I say

I am not a sinner I make God a liar. God sent Jesus to this world freighted with life for the sinner's use. Weighty words! Here may we have something for our solitary hours, a link between God and us. "I love Thy testimonies." "I understand more than the ancients." "I am wiser than all my teachers." (Ps. cxix. 99, 100, 119). Was this insolence in David? No; it was the boldness of faith.

There is no humbler thing in the moral creation than for faith to take the place God gives.

There is a very comfortable secret contained in verse 13. The apostle writes to those who know the Son of God, to interpret to them all that is involved in that knowledge. They may now know their blessedness, which he wishes to tell them, that they have eternal life.

Many a dear soul does not know the blessedness in which it stands in the knowledge of Christ. Surely we ought to know that if Christ has done a work for us, it is that He may bless us: "That ye *may know* that ye *have* eternal life." (1 John v. 13.)

When the unconverted are spoken to about Christ, it is to work a change in them; but here it is interpreting Christ as eternal life to those who believe. There is a large generation who, while they believe in Christ, and would, as much as Paul himself, hate every other confidence, yet do not know the blessed place in which they stand.

We must linger still a little here. It is unto "you that believe *on the name* of the Son of God."

Have you ever traced the names of God through the volume of Scripture? It is a beau-

tiful study. In the first chapter of Genesis it is simply "God." In the second, it is not only the naked, abstract name of God, but the "Lord God"; thus putting Him in connection with and nearness to man.

As we go on through the book we find the title drawing us still nearer. We find the new name "the God of Abraham."

In Exodus, when Moses says, "When they shall ask me Thy name, what shall I say unto them?" The answer is, "I am that I am" (Jehovah Jah). But not only this, not only the title of the self-existent God, but, "The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; . . . this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." (Exod. iii. 14, 15.) And further on again, when Moses pleaded for Israel in the matter of the golden calf, he was hid in the cleft of the rock, and "the LORD passed by before him." This is the name in which the Lord delighted; a name which declared God as suited to lost and ruined creatures.

I shall not linger here to speak of Isaiah's Immanuel, but pass on to Matt. i. Here we meet with "Jesus," the Saviour; and again, at the close of the ministry, where the time is come for the full display of glory, He commands the apostles to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "Name," not *names*, because though three Persons, they are but one God. This is the full disclosure of divine glory. We stand in the faith of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (Matt. xxviii. 19.)

In the book of the Acts the word "name" is

much insisted on, often repeated. It is the "name of the Son of God" as here, His name as He now stands, having accomplished all that a sinner needs; having died, and risen again. Be it known unto you that when by faith you adopt this name, you adopt all that the Son of God has done for poor sinners. He has been declared to be "the Son of God with power," and that name is published now all over the world as the only introduction to the true God. (Rom. i. 4.) When we turn to Rev. xix. we have Jesus as the Rider on the white horse, coming forth in the last display of glory, surrounded by all dignitaries, clad with all the glories that He has earned for Himself: "And His name is called THE WORD OF GOD."

Just like many matters in the Scriptures, His name becomes gradually disclosed, as we bring the various parts together. It is just in character with the unity of the whole volume.

And let me say, there is nothing so persuasive of the divine origin of the Book as this very fact of its unity, and by the variety of its writers separated by ages, nay, thousands of years; separated by habits, occupations, and sympathies, yet united to form a work divine in its unity.

The name of Christ unfolds its glories gradually from the bright creation glory of Gen. i. to the more excellent glory of "King of kings, and Lord of lords" in Rev. xix. Yes, God has come into this world to gain honour to Himself for ever, and *from us!*

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WORDS OF TRUTH

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

God's Will; Christ's Work; the Holy Spirit's Witness.

(Read Hebrews x. 7-24.)

IN the opening of the chapter we are instructed as to the utter inadequacy of the sacrifices under the law. They could never make the conscience perfect; they could never accomplish the will of God; never fulfil the gracious desire and purpose of His heart. "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because THE WORSHIPPERS ONCE PURGED should have had NO MORE CONSCIENCE OF SINS." (vv. 1, 2.)

Let the reader carefully note this: "The wor-

shippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." He does not say, "No more *consciousness of sin*." There is an immense difference between these two things; and yet it is to be feared they are often confounded. The Christian has, alas! the consciousness of *sin in him*; but he ought to have no conscience of *sins on him*, inasmuch as he is purged once and for ever by the precious blood of Christ.

Some of the Lord's people have a habit of speaking of their continual need of applying to the blood of Christ. This, to say the least of it, is by no means intelligent, or in accordance with the accurate teaching of Holy Scripture. It seems like humility; but, we may rest assured, true humility can only be found in connection with the full, clear, settled apprehension of the truth of God and as to His gracious will concerning us. If it be His will that we should have "no more conscience of sins," it cannot be true humility on our part to go on from day to day, and year to year, with the burden of sins upon us.

And, further, if it be true that Christ has borne our sins and put them away for ever, if He has offered one perfect sacrifice for sins, ought we not to know assuredly that we are perfectly pardoned and perfectly purged? Is it, can it be, true humility to reduce the blood of Christ to the level of the blood of bulls and of goats? But this is what is virtually done, though no doubt unwittingly, by all who speak of applying continually to the blood of Christ.

One reason why God found fault with the sacrifices under the law was that, as the apostle tells us, "in those sacrifices there is a remem-

brance again made of sins every year." This, blessed be His name, was not according to His mind. He desired that every trace of guilt, and every remembrance of it, should be blotted out once and for ever; and hence it cannot be His will that His people should be continually bowed down under the terrible burden of unforgiven sin. It is contrary to His will; it is subversive of their peace, and derogatory to the glory of Christ and the efficacy of His one sacrifice.

One grand point of the inspired argument in Hebrews x. is to show that the continual remembrance of sins and the continual repetition of the sacrifice go together; and therefore, if Christians now are to have the burden of sins constantly on the heart and conscience, it follows that Christ should be offered again and again, which were a blasphemy. His work is done, and hence our burden is gone, gone for ever.

"It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do Thy will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified [or set apart] by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE."

1. Here we are conducted in the most distinct

and forcible manner to the eternal source of the whole matter, namely,

THE WILL OF GOD,

the purpose and counsel, formed in the divine mind before the foundation of the world; before any creature was formed; before sin or Satan existed. It was the will of God from all eternity that the Son should in due time come forth and do a work which was to be the foundation of the the divine glory and of all the counsels and purposes of the Trinity.

It would be a very grave error indeed to suppose that redemption was an after-thought with God. When sin entered, He had not, blessed be His holy name, to sit down and plan what He would do. It was all settled beforehand. The enemy no doubt imagined that he was gaining a wonderful victory when he meddled with man in the garden of Eden. In point of fact he was only giving occasion for the display of God's eternal counsels in connection with the work of the Son. There was no basis for these counsels, no sphere for their display, in the fields of creation. It was the meddling of Satan, the entrance of sin, the ruin of man, that opened a platform on which a Saviour-God might display the riches of His grace, the glories of His salvation, the attributes to His nature, to all created intelligences.

There is great depth and power in those words of the eternal Son: "In the volume of the book it is written of me."

To what "volume" does He here refer? Is it to Old Testament Scripture? Surely not; the apostle is quoting from the Old Testament.

What, then, is the volume? It is nothing less than the roll of God's eternal counsels in which the "vast plan" was laid, according to which, in the appointed time, the eternal Son was to come forth, and appear on the scene in order to accomplish the divine will, vindicate the divine glory, confound the enemy utterly, put away sin, and save ruined man in a manner which yields a richer harvest of glory to God than ever He could have reaped in the fields of unfallen creation.

All this gives immense stability to the soul of the believer. Indeed, it is utterly impossible for human language to set forth the preciousness and blessedness of this line of truth. It is such rich consolation to every pious soul to know that One has appeared in this world to do the will of God, whatever that will might be: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Such was the one undivided purpose and object of that perfect human heart. He never did His own will in anything. He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." It mattered not to Him what that will might involve to Himself personally. The decree was written down in the eternal volume that He should come and do the divine will; and, all homage to His peerless name! He came and did it perfectly. He could say, "A body hast Thou prepared me." "Mine ears hast thou opened." (Ps. xl. 6). "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear,

and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Isaiah l. 3-6.)

2. This leads us, in the second place, to contemplate

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

It was ever the delight of the heart of Jesus to do His Father's will and finish His work. (John iv. 34.) From the manger at Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, the one grand object that swayed His devoted heart was the accomplishment of THE WILL OF GOD. He perfectly glorified God in all things. This, blessed be God, perfectly secures our full and everlasting salvation, as the apostle in this passage so distinctly states: "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE."

Here our souls may rest, beloved reader, in sweetest peace and unclouded certainty. It was THE WILL OF GOD that we should be set apart to Himself, according to all the love of His heart, and all the claims of His throne; and our Lord Christ, in due time, in pursuance of the everlasting purpose as set forth "in the volume of the book," came forth from the glory which He had with the Father before all worlds, to do the work which forms the imperishable basis of all the divine counsels and of our eternal salvation.

And (for ever be His name adored!) He has finished His work (John xvii. 4.) He has perfectly glorified God in the midst of the scene in which He had been so dishonoured. At all

cost He vindicated Him, and made good His every claim. He magnified the law, and made it honourable. He vanquished every foe; removed every obstacle; swept away every barrier; bore the judgment and wrath of a sin-hating God; destroyed death and him that had the power of it; extracted its sting, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, He gloriously accomplished all that was written "in the volume of the book" concerning Him; and now we see Him crowned with glory and honour, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He travelled from the throne to "the dust of death" in order to accomplish THE WILL OF GOD; and having done so He has gone back to the throne in a new character and on a new footing.

His pathway from the throne to the cross was marked by the footprints of divine and everlasting love; and His pathway from the cross back to the throne is sprinkled by His atoning blood. He came from heaven to earth to do THE WILL OF GOD; and having done it He returned to heaven again; thus opening up for us "a new and living way" by which we draw nigh to God in holy boldness and liberty, as purged worshippers. (vv. 19-22.)

All is done. Every question is settled. Every barrier is removed. The veil is rent. (Matt. xxvii. 51; Heb. x. 20.) That mysterious curtain which, for ages and generations, had shut God in from man, and shut man out from God, was rent in twain, from top to bottom, by the precious death of Christ; and now we can look right up into the opened heavens and see on the throne the Man who bore our sins in His own body *on the tree*. A seated Christ tells out,

in the ear of faith, the sweet, emancipating tale that all that had to be done is done; done for ever; done for God; done for us. Yes, all is settled now; and God can in perfect righteousness indulge the love of His heart in blotting out all our sins, and bringing us nigh unto Himself in all the acceptance of the One who sits beside Him on the throne. (Eph. i. 6.)

And let the reader carefully note the striking and beautiful way in which the apostle contrasts A SEATED CHRIST IN HEAVEN with THE STANDING PRIEST ON EARTH: "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever [in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever [in perpetuity] them that are sanctified." (vv. 11-13.)

This is uncommonly fine. The priest under the Levitical economy could never sit down, for the obvious reason that his work was never done. There was no seat provided in the temple or in the tabernacle. There is remarkable force and significance in the manner in which the inspired writer puts this. "*Every priest,*" "*standeth daily,*" "*offering oftentimes,*" "*the same sacrifices,*" "*which can never take away sins.*" No human language could possibly set forth more graphically the dreary monotony and utter inefficacy of the Levitical ceremonial. How strange that, in the face of such a passage of Holy Scripture, Christendom should have set up a human priesthood with its daily sacrifice; a priest-

hood, moreover, not belonging to the tribe of Levi, not springing from the house of Aaron, and therefore having no sort of divine title or sanction. And then as to the sacrifice, it is, according to their own admission, a sacrifice without blood, and therefore a sacrifice without remission; for, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." (Hebrews ix. 22.)

The priests of whom the apostle speaks in Hebrews x. were priests of the tribe of Levi and of the house of Aaron, the only house, the only tribe ever recognized of God as having any title to assume the office and work of a priest upon earth. And, further, the sacrifices which the Aaronic priests offered were appointed by God for the time being ; but they never gave Him any pleasure, inasmuch as they could never take away sins; and they have been for ever abolished.

Now, in view of all this, what shall we say of Christendom's priests and Christendom's sacrifices? What will a righteous Judge say to them? We cannot attempt to dwell upon such an awful theme. We can merely say, Alas ! alas ! for the poor souls that are deluded and ruined by such antichristian absurdities. May God in His mercy deliver them, and lead them to rest in the ONE OFFERING of Jesus Christ, that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. May many be led to see that A REPEATED SACRIFICE and A SEATED CHRIST are in positive antagonism. If the sacrifice must be repeated, Christ has no right to His seat and to His crown. God pardon the very penning of the words ! If Christ has a divine right to His seat and to His crown, then to repeat a sacrifice is simply a blasphemy against His cross, His name, His glory. To repeat the

sacrifice in any way or under any form whatsoever is to deny the efficacy of Christ's "one offering," and to rob the soul of anything like an approach to the knowledge of remission of sins. A REPEATED SACRIFICE and PERFECT REMISSION are an absolute contradiction in terms.

3. We turn now to the third grand point in our subject, namely,

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

This is of the deepest possible moment for the reader to understand. It gives great completeness to the subject. How are we to know that Christ has, by His work on the cross, absolutely and divinely accomplished THE WILL OF GOD? Simply by the witness of the Holy Ghost in Scripture. This is the third pillar on which the Christian's position rests, and it is as thoroughly divine and therefore as thoroughly independent of man as the other two. It is very evident that man had nothing to do with the eternal counsels of the Trinity, nothing to do with the glorious work accomplished on the cross. All this is clear; and it is equally clear that man has nothing to do with the authority on which our souls receive the joyful news as to THE WILL OF GOD, and THE WORK OF CHRIST, inasmuch as it is nothing less than THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

We cannot be too simple as to this. It is not by any means a question of our feelings, our frames, our evidences, or our experiences, things interesting enough in their right place. We must receive the truth solely and simply on the authority of that august Witness who speaks to us in Holy Scripture. Thus we read:

"Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; 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." (*vv. 15-17.*)

Here, then, we have fully before us the solid foundation of the Christian's position and the Christian's peace. It is all of God from first to last. The WILL, the WORK, and the WITNESS are all divine. The Lord be praised for this glorious fact! What should we do, what would become of us, were it otherwise? In this day of confusion, when souls are tossed about by every wind of doctrine; when the beloved sheep of Christ are driven hither and thither in bewilderment and perplexity; when ritualism with its ignorant absurdities, and rationalism with its impudent blasphemies, and spiritualism with its horrible traffic with demons, are threatening the very foundations of our faith, how important it is for Christians to know what those foundations really are, and that they should be consciously resting thereon!

Meditations on the First Epistle of John.

XII.

GOD could let Moses know that He derived more pleasure from the name He got in contact with poor sinners than from

His own title of essential glory. His name, Jehovah, He shall be known by, but His name of grace shall be His memorial to all generations.

And now we see that it is the expression of the divine goodness to serve others. God prizes such occasions. Would that we could give Him credit for it! He loves to be the God of sinners rather than the God of glory! I have but to trust Him, to know that I have eternal life. Oh! cannot I let myself go, and commit myself to Him? Shame, shame, if you do not let yourself go, and slip into His arms!

There are two thoughts in verses 14, 15: it is one thing to be conscious of your personal acceptance, and another to know that your petitions are accepted. You ought to be certain of your own acceptance; you cannot always be certain of the acceptance of your petitions. You do not want assurance (or you should not) of your own acceptance; but you do want to be assured of the acceptance of your petitions, because a condition attaches to them. If I go to a human friend with a request, I must know two things: one is, that he should accept my requirement, the other, that he should accept myself. When I go to God with a request, I should not agitate the question of my own acceptance, yet I must of the acceptance of my petitions.

There are two ways of interpreting the passage in verse 16 in the light of Scripture. It may be spoken of ecclesiastical or of personal (that is, individual) sins. In 1 Corinthians xi. we have the sin unto death as an offence in the Church, but there is another sin unto death; it is the sin of Cain. We have it in Acts, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish." (xiii. 41.)