

A
V O I C E
TO
T H E F A I T H F U L .

“He that striveth for the mastery is temperate in
all things.”—1 Cor. ix. 25.

VOL. I.

LONDON GOSPEL TRACT DEPOT,
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A Voice to the Faithful.

INTRODUCTION.

BELOVED IN THE LORD,

In offering to you a monthly paper (if the Lord will), under the title of "A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL," we seek fellowship with our Lord's present ministry to His saints. He "loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, having purged it, washing it with water through the word;" and now, as the Head in heaven, He gives all His gifts "for the perfecting of the saints." Hence His servant, according as he is in company and concert with His mind, will share in the apostle's CONFLICT,

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“Warning every man and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” In any day this was the duty and business of the faithful servant, but how much more when we find ourselves so intermixed both in doctrine and practice with the principles and habits of the incipient apostasy.

As God moved and empowered Nehemiah and Ezra, each in his day, to extricate himself from Babylon, and devote himself to the sphere of God’s interests on the earth at the time, how much more may we reckon on Him to fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness and enable us, in spite of the “much rubbish,” to maintain that “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” and to be braced up by the word, “Watch thou in all things; do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

INTRODUCTION.

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The great obstacle and hindrance to the growth of Christ in souls in this day, is the similarity of the intellectual with the spiritual: hence the former are ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. It is the human mind, led on by the same spirit as Jannes and Jambres, which now so obstructs the power of the truth.

Our place and duty, beloved, is to address ourselves to set forth the truth as it is revealed in the holy scriptures, being assured that however feebly the truth is presented, it has its own divine power, and as we grow in it we grow equal to it.

May the faithful be animated and girded up for this blessed work! The deliverer must first deliver himself, and may each of us as he receives be ready to contribute to this paper any word of counsel or instruction which the Lord has given him, so that he that hath an

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ear may hear what the Lord is saying. And may it be in the hearts of MANY before Him, that there may be from Him help and guidance to serve in this little way His beloved people.

THE LIGHT IN A DAY OF
DIFFICULTY.

THE light in a day of difficulty, every believer will own, must be given of God; nay, it *is* given of God. And yet many a believer there is who does not feel that he has it; he does not see his way in times of difficulty; he has not acquired the truth which avails to guide him in his distress. Light necessarily must be that which opposes and counteracts darkness. The darkness is the difficulty: that is light which doth make manifest. We have not discovered the light unless we have discovered it as the corrective and exposure of that which hinders and obstructs it. "God is light,

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and in him is no darkness at all." And it is in His light that we see light.

God reveals Himself to His people in every age, according to His own mind at the time; that is, as He wishes His people to be at any time; according to this He reveals Himself, for *as He wishes* must be everything to them, and the only thing for them at that special moment. According as this revelation is maintained, His mind at the time is maintained; and all that which would oppose or obstruct is simply and authoritatively met by the simple assertion and maintenance of the truth He has given. He supports His own truth; and the revelation of His mind must be the light at any given time. There is no other light. Man's understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God. All here is darkness, and there is no light in the scene; nothing to make manifest the darkness but the revelation of God. Hence the revelation, according as it is given and according to its fulness, must be the light and the only light. And if this revelation be

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not maintained, there must be darkness, and no power to rise above or expose it; for once exposed, it is gone.

Now if we observe the life and ways of God's people, as recorded for us in scripture, we shall see that they were equal to the difficulty and mastered it, according as they walked in the truth committed to them; but that they failed and missed their course as they declined from the word and revelation of God. And as we see this we shall be warned and helped to lay hold on the truth revealed to us, in order that we may, through His grace (for He supports them who hold fast His word), discern our true way, and be happy in fellowship with the Holy Ghost as His witnesses. Surely that soul must be dull and indifferent who is insensible to the difficulty and confusion of this day. And yet it is not enough to be sensible to the difficulties in our way: the real thing for us to be occupied with, is the light vouchsafed to us in such a day to preserve our way through and above them all. This light has been given of

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God in every age. It is the revelation of His own mind, as far as He has been pleased to disclose it. His mind for us at any given time must evidently define the course and relation He would have us to observe with respect to Himself at the time; and which, if observed, must place us, with reference to all which opposes Him, according as He would have us. And this must be the way; the path for us at the time. If this be not so, if God does not give His mind for His people in every age and time, the conclusion is that they must then be placed in a world of darkness, of difficulty, with no light, no way of escape. But far from this; God *has* given His mind in every age and time, and His people have been preserved and delivered from every difficulty, in proportion as they have walked according to the revelation; while they suffered as they in any way departed from it. Let us examine the scriptures and see how this truth is there presented to us.

Surely the word to Adam in the garden of Eden was sufficient to guide and

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preserve him from the guile and efforts of the serpent. Failure and ruin were superinduced by Eve's listening and assenting to a denial of the word: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." If they had persistently adhered to the simple instruction conveyed in these words, the suggestions of Satan would have been fully and entirely overruled. The serpent set aside and denied the plain meaning of the counsel of God. It was not that God had not given counsel for a probable exigence, or had left His people to seek it when the trial came; but He had given a counsel fit and suited to guide and preserve them from every difficulty; and Satan knew this so well that his effort was to pervert the word, deny its truthfulness, and thus deprive his victim of all power to see or preserve the right way. The counsel would perfectly have secured them if they had strictly and simply followed it; but they surrendered the counsel, and were carried blindfold into impenetrable darkness. Thus, in this opening scene in the history of man

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we learn in the simplest way how God's mind at any time, simply and definitely accepted and adhered to, would guide us and preserve us from the evils occurrent or levelled against us at any time. Some may say, We have not, like Eve, only one simple line of instruction: we have such a large, comprehensive unfolding of the mind and ways of God, that we are often at a loss to know what is the special one suited to our exigence—one says one, and one says another. Eve, on the contrary, could have no difficulty of the kind, for there is but one word of counsel to Adam; and it is plain enough that if they had adhered to it they would have been guided and preserved from the assaults and efforts of Satan. This is specious, and has an appearance of just reasoning; but it rests on an implied inaccuracy, even that there is no special counsel of God for a given time. On the contrary, I believe we shall find that the manner of God's way with us is ever to give us *one leading truth*, which, while it does not displace other truths, but establishes them, has a

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marked singularity; and, because of this singularity, is the only adequate and competent light to guide and preserve from the difficulty and opposition then in force. The principle is plain enough. Here we see how the value of the counsel was wrested by the serpent from Eve; and also how perfectly all his wiles would have been defeated, had Eve simply and unflinchingly abode by the counsel of God. God had counselled, and we can see how entirely effectual and competent to guide in the exigence that counsel would have been if followed.

Let us look at another instance. The word to Noah (Gen. ix.) when "God blessed Noah and his sons," is "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered." Furthermore, "God spake unto Noah, and his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and

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with your seed after you." (Ver. 8, 9.) Again, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." (Ver. 13.) Now there are two lines of counsel here: one, the place man was now to occupy on the earth, the place of superiority over everything; the other, the sign of the covenant of God with the earth. Here, then, we have two lines of instruction which comprise the truth, and the truth is the light which was to guide and preserve Noah and his sons in their day, and through all the difficulties of their time and position. No former counsel of God, however great and useful in unfolding His mind and ways, would have sufficed to guide and deliver them in their day; therefore counsel suited to the day and to the trials of it is given to them. If they do not adhere to it, they must be overcome and lose ground; but if they do adhere to and maintain it, they will find it a light, and thus secure a clear escape from all the perils of the time. It is very blessed and helpful to understand

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this principle of God's way with His people. Noah and his sons did not maintain the counsel of God in either line. Noah plants a vineyard, and is overcome by wine; when, by the counsel of God, he was enjoined to maintain himself superior to everything; while his son exhibits the recklessness of insubjection; both running counter to the terms of God's counsel as to the place of government in which He had set them on the earth. Eventually, in the building of Babel, God's link and sign of covenant with the earth is entirely overlooked. Mark! the evil of the day to be guarded against was twofold, and the line of instruction which was to act as a preservative from it was also twofold. The difficulty was the maintenance, on the one hand, of unqualified supremacy and acknowledged authority; and on the other, God's link and covenant with men on the earth as the only point of centralization in it. No other counsel but that which they received could have served or helped in such a time. The first point of departure from it was in

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Noah himself; and all the failure which followed, and the eventual climax of rebellion in Babel, is simply attributable to the neglect of the counsel of God.

Now in Abram's history this principle is still more clearly expounded and enforced. The counsel to him was very short and definite. The observance of it always secured blessing and deliverance; while the neglect of it, on the contrary, invariably involved him in sorrow and perplexity. If we gather this from the history of God's people in every former age, surely we are warned and assured that there must be *for us in our day* some simple and definite counsel, which, being observed, would guide and help us through all our difficulties; and which, on the contrary, if neglected, would expose us to confusion and defeat. It is a great gain when we have learned a certain fixed principle of God in His ways and government, because then we know that He will not deviate from it; nor can He, for it is according to His essential moral being. If we find ourselves authorized

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from scripture to conclude that God always gives a counsel suited to the time His people are in, and that their confusion and powerlessness to escape from the difficulties around them are traceable to their neglect of this counsel, it is evident that we can reduce all the embarrassments of the people of God at any given time to a very simple question; viz. 'What is the counsel of God, given for that or this time, which would be a light to those who walk according thereto?' This I believe I can, with the Lord's help, point out from the word; while I would beg my readers to bear one truth in special remembrance, viz., that the former revelations and counsels of God, while they have fully and entirely afforded light to His people in the time at which they were given, and are *the* truth to give us light in any circumstances similar to those in which the people of God were then placed, are not and cannot be the light for us in totally different circumstances, to meet which we are entrusted by God with a further unfolding of His mind;

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though every previous unfolding of it is subsidiary, and strengthens us in the knowledge of God, and in the more persistent maintenance of the counsel which He has given us for our day. But I will not anticipate. I judge that it will be more confirmatory to trace this principle through scripture, and therefore I hope to resume in my next paper how we find it exemplified in Abram's history.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

QUALITIES OF LIGHT.

THE light of God at times shines *in*, doing a needed work in the conscience, as when Saul was felled to the earth, or as when Peter cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It says, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead."

But at other times it shines *beside* us, leaving us to discern it and to use it as we may have grace. The light of God thus shining is a beautiful element, and it is a pity and a sorrow that we are not

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all, in all our ways, absorbed in that element. But it is not so with us; and we make the most humbling discoveries of ourselves at times by judging our ways in the calm light of the presence and mind of Christ.

The qualities of the divine action form much of this light. It is not merely the material, but the very style of the way of Christ, carries a quantity of this light with it.

We may note two qualities in divine activities as we get them in scripture, which thus, as light, shine before us or beside us. The divine *calmness* in times of difficulty; and the divine *earnestness* when sympathies or affections were called forth.

When Israel was pressed behind and before, the Red Sea in front, and the host of Egypt in the rear, the *God of Israel was all calmness*. "Bid the people go forward; why liest thou on thy face?" said He to Moses. This was even as before when in Egypt the people had been afresh vexed by their taskmasters, and cried out in despair, and

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when Moses himself complained as finding the occasion too big for him; one that he could not manage; the Lord, on the difficulty being brought to Him, says, "I am the Lord," and then calmly interprets that moment to Moses, letting him know how He would dispose of it. (Exodus v., vi.) But I need not multiply instances; they appear so to speak everywhere. "With God nothing is impossible." "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" If the dead have to be raised, the rebuke to fears, or doubts, or unbelief, is this: "Ye have not the knowledge of God." "Ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God." This calmness in the presence of difficulty marked the action of the Lord Jesus when He was here. We have many instances of this; as on the lake when the storms arose; as in desert places again and again, when the multitude had to be fed; as when death had entered either the house of Jairus or the family at Bethany. In such cases we see calmness which is divine filling the soul and keeping the ways of the Lord;

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and we find ourselves in the presence of the same glory, as when Egyptian difficulties and dangers or wilderness necessities beset the path of Israel; or when as it seemed there was nothing but the power of death in the house of Abraham.

But again we may see earnestness on occasions when the sympathies of either joy or sorrow were to be awakened. As at creation the divine mind took its delight and rest in the fruit of the divine power; so after the fall, it was deep heartfelt grief and repenting over the injured and polluted scene that spread itself under His eye. (Gen. vi. 6.)

In Judges x. 16, we read, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." But when anticipating His returning mercies to Israel, and all that His hand stretched out will do for them, He says, "I will do it assuredly with my *whole* heart and my *whole* soul." (Jer. xxxii. 41.)

When He looked on the bondage of His people in Egypt, how deeply did He give His sympathies to them. Read Exodus ii. See Him again in the

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burning bush, the token of the full and hearty way in which He, so to speak, wept with them that wept; and then on the other hand mark the earnestness in which He gives Himself to the work of His own grace, and takes His seat in the sanctuary of peace: "Mine eyes and mine heart" (says the Lord, touching the house that Solomon built) "shall be there perpetually." What expressions are these amid a thousand like ones, of the full earnest way in which He entered into all that concerned His saints! He was all calmness when difficulties arose to call forth what needed divine strength; He was all earnestness when the occasion demanded His sympathies.

And so with Jesus in the days of His flesh. We have seen His calmness in the hour of difficulty; and we find Him too, earnest when occasions sought His sympathies. He wept over Jerusalem, while in Luke xv. He lets us into the secret of divine joy. The deep possession of His soul in John iv. when He tells His disciples He had meat to eat

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which they knew not of, bespeaks the earnestness of His soul in very wondrous language. The way in which He allows His heart to express itself when the due time had come—the parting hour—in John xiii.—xvii., is the same; and beyond all instances, the manner in which He *bound the disciples to Himself*, though He never made it His object, nor ever sought to engage their hearts by the poor acts which our selfishness so commonly practises. Surely all this tells us of the unmixed reality of His sympathies and affections; and that is true earnestness.

And there is in all this a light shining *before* us or *beside* us, that may well both cheer and confound us. It cheers us, by telling us what *He* assuredly is; it confounds us by enabling us to discover what *we* are. We are not to be confounded without being cheered. The first duty we can render to the life of Christ is to learn from what He is; and in the next place to learn how dull and cloudy our best way is in the presence of such a life and love as His.

NEARNESS TO GOD AND ITS EFFECTS.

(1 Chronicles xvii.)

IN nature we are at a distance from God, not only because we distrust Him, but because we *have* distrusted Him. The very wrong we have done Him has wrought enmity in our hearts. A backbiting tongue hateth those who are afflicted by it; how much more when, as to God, we can never repair the wrong we have done. We therefore cannot draw near to God until we understand through His own teaching that a new and living way is opened for us through the veil, which is the flesh of Christ. *Then* we draw near. There is nothing done by ourselves: it is all on God's side. The veil is rent to introduce us into a nearness from which we were entirely shut out; and the rending of the body of Christ delivered us from the judgment of our sin which lay upon us and of that on which it lay, that thus relieved we might draw near through the new and living way. Now the more we know God's

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thoughts about us in connection with this new and living way, the more are our hearts assured to draw near in all familiar ease and rest in His presence. The more I attend to the recital of His thoughts about me, the more do I believe in them, and feel myself entitled to draw near, and, like David, to "sit before the Lord." David had heard and believed what Nathan had communicated, and the effect of it on him was to lead him at once to go and sit before the Lord in all familiar ease. It is *His* thoughts about me, the knowledge of *His* love and interest in me, which leads me into this nearness. It is no sense of my own reality, or zeal, or devotedness to Him. John knew a nearness to our Lord which Peter, with all his earnestness, never reached. The "disciple whom Jesus loved" distinctly characterized the one who leaned on His bosom at supper. Mary had a nearness which Martha had not, though very zealous to please and to serve Him; so that the measure of my familiar nearness to God is always in proportion to the sense in my soul of

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His thoughts and interest about me. If I know the greatness of His love for me, I must, like David, as I dwell on it, draw near and sit before Him.

Now the first effect of this nearness is *worship*. You cannot worship the Father if you do not know Him. Consequently worship is connected with the knowledge of eternal life. (John iv. 23.) I cannot worship the Father in spirit and in truth, but as I am in the sense of His greatness, His goodness, and His nearness to me. *Then* my heart is fixed, and I fall down adoringly in acknowledgment of what I know and see Him to be. When I worship I am controlled by the blessedness and majesty of the object which controls me, and in God this can only fully be.

But besides worship, nearness also leads to fellowship. There is a communion with God in the circle of His interests, in which circle I necessarily, as in the life of Christ, find myself. Thus David here enters into the history and glory of Israel. God's engagements engage our hearts. We have

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fellowship with the Father and the Son in eternal life, and are led by the Spirit into the circle of His interests and glory in which through grace we are placed at the *time*. These great subjects engage and occupy our hearts; we are at home in them; we are in a circle and region above and beyond our own natural tastes and interests. The true and only perfect way of dissociating us from our own lower tastes and interests is to introduce us into the highest and most blessed; and this, nearness to God always effects. We often try to rise above our nature by many other expedients, but nothing will ever truly and permanently deliver us from its tastes and influences but the circle of God's interests, into which nearness to Himself always introduces us. David accepted the place of nearness at once, and his soul drank in the results. Abraham, on the other hand, had, like many of us, to learn that God Himself was sufficient for him without an Isaac, and this he learned in its full blessedness on Mount Moriah.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

ELEMENTARY TRUTH.

“CHRIST is the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. i. 24.) Now these are two distinct lines of truth; the one, which is the power of God, for the conscience; the other, which is the wisdom of God, for the spiritual mind. Christ comprises both. The apostle says, “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the *power of God*. Howbeit we speak *wisdom* among them that are perfect,” &c. Now to the *wisdom* the babes in Christ should be gently *led on*; but the *power*, what the grace of God is in dealing with a ruined sinner, ought to be within the comprehension of the true-hearted, however young in the school. Nevertheless it will be found, in daily converse with souls, that even this, elementary though it be, is very feebly apprehended; nay, that the divine *idea* in renewing a soul is seldom or never laid hold of; and if this be not laid hold of there can be no correct or adequate conception of what

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new birth is. I believe it is at the very foundation that the real cause of weakness in souls is to be found. And one of the evidences of how the will is in this weakness (for it is nothing but the flesh), is the obduracy and slowness of souls to lay hold of God's idea in sending His Son to bless them. If you ask believers in general what they consider is elementary, you will find that it is something which is to contribute to man as man is. Now the grace of God begins entirely outside; reveals His Son in me. I am daily more convinced that the reason why souls call God's idea, and, blessed be His name, His accomplished purpose (viz., that He has given us eternal life in His Son), "high truth," is because they do not want to cease conferring with flesh and blood.

Surely our Lord's wondrous words in John iv., as to the "gift of God," were elementary; or, at least, He considered that they were not above the reach of the poor, ignorant, and abandoned woman of Samaria; yet if such truth

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were insisted on in the present day, there is no doubt that all who desire to gratify their reputable tastes and foster their ambition, would designate it "high truth." It was the definiteness of *God's idea* for man that our blessed Lord then enunciated: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into *everlasting life*." This I believe is what is not sufficiently insisted on in this day, though most elementary, and, to the true-hearted soul, it will always be with the voice of the Son of God.

Souls like forgiveness to be preached, and they like to enjoy it; and though forgiven, to lie on their "beds" just as palsied as ever (see Mark ii. 8—12), only more comfortably as to conscience, which is quieted by being delivered from the fear of judgment; but they have no idea of what is God's thought for them by the gift of eternal life in His Son, for if they had they would take up their beds and walk. I fear what people call

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“high truth” is too often, even as it was with the scribes and Pharisees in our Lord’s day, something which they do not *wish* to understand.

THE QUIETNESS OF COMMUNION.

SERVING the Lord in order to be happier in Him tends to legality. The work done is the source of the happiness and not Christ Himself. In John xiv. I learn what Christ is to me, and there is no service enjoined beyond obedience, which is the proof of love. If I love, I obey. Mary Magdalene is an example to me of one whose heart was so true to Christ that apostles or angels could not divert her from Him; but as soon as she has seen Him, her heart is satisfied. His calling her by name is everything, a personal, individual link. What can surpass it? She is so controlled by Him of whom her heart is full, that she obeys Him even at the loss of His bodily presence, because a truly loving one could do nothing less. I believe that deep, personal joy in Christ is a very quiet, unexpressed thing. Where there

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is great fervour in expression there is not likely to be so much depth, though there may be real conviction. Demonstration rather expresses first discovery, than a home sense of personal enjoyment. How much demonstration and rapture do we exhibit to our most beloved friends when we are at home with one another? When we meet them after an absence, there may be rapture, but this is an evidence that there *has* been absence. Alas! we are often absent from our Lord; and the renewed sense of His presence may doubtless produce rapture in its contrast from what has gone before; but it is the lower thing, and the restful enjoyment of His personal nearness the greater thing. Let us therefore not make everything of rapture, but rise from it to the deeper occupation of abiding communion with Him. It is from this communion that the service ought to flow; for communion with any one is in fact a *common mind* with such a one; and if I have it with God, I know my Master's mind. It is not the hardest working servant who is the most

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confidential in the household, and it is the confidential servant who is the highest. I am willing to keep the door, if no other work be allotted to me; but I should like so to keep it that my Master should trust me with His mind.

The saint is never to think himself proof against the evil in the world. No doubt by faith he is kept from the evil; but then he must not shut his eyes to the special form it takes in his day, if he would be free from it. The reverse is the fact. Any evil working in the world finds its way into the hearts of saints in a refined, specious way. Now sensationalism is one of the means by which Satan is blinding the minds of the people of the world in this day. Be it the novel, the concert, or the stage, a sort of mental intoxication is sought and produced. And may not this in a specious form enter into spiritual things? Was there none of it in the revival meetings? Is there not a leaven of it now? And should not souls see that their rapture and delight is not that in which the flesh takes part; but on the

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contrary, that which ignores the existence of the flesh, because they are "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit?"

IN CHRIST IN HEAVEN.

AND art Thou gone where all is light,
Blest Saviour!—passed from mortal sight,
To Thine own native air!

Where no defiling thing can come,
Where *nature* cannot find a home,
Nor *flesh* an entrance dare?

Amen! our hearts respond, and raise
Their hallelujah notes of praise,
Though still on earth *we* roam!
To *Thee* 'tis joy!—to *us* not grief:
Not sev'rance from Thee, but relief,
That glory is Thy home!

We love Thy footprints here to trace,
The moral beauty and the grace
Of all Thy walk of love:
Dear memories!—but would we detain
Thee here below, for any gain
Thy company would prove?

Nay! for the life which Thou hast given
Finds its *own level* but in heaven,
And *there* its source must be:
Thy life in us, for range, repose,
Craves its own region, where it *knows*
Its fountain, Lord! in Thee.'

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And though we tread the desert here,
 Our interests and our joys are *there*,
 Guarded—maintained by Thee;
 Nor could we *spare* Thee from that home,
 Till the blest hour when Thou shalt come,
 To take us there to be!

'Tis there, Lord Jesus, where alone
 Our spirits find it all *their own*,
 Where flesh can ne'er intrude:
 The presence-chamber of our God,
 Where witnesseth the sprinkled blood,
 All power by Thee subdued.

Thy rest, Lord Jesus! pass'd Thy woe!
 The "Man of sorrows," as below,
 Thou never more canst be!
Thine was our grief, *ours* is Thy joy;
 And now we drink without alloy,
 The cup of joy with Thee!

'Tis *as we drink it* that we turn
 With Thee to view, *from* Thee to learn,
 Thy path of earthly woe;
 For only on that sacred height—
 Yea! only in Thy glory's light,
 Such wonders can we know.

'Tis *there* we see Thee (past all fears),
 Reaping in joy, who sowed in tears,
 There reap we too with Thee;
 And soon "rejoicing" Thou shalt come,
 Bearing Thy sheaves! while Thy blest home
 Ours shall for ever be!

THE LIGHT IN A DAY OF DIFFICULTY.

PART II.

THE counsel given to Abram in his day was "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house—unto a land that I will shew thee." This was God's counsel to him. As he observed it, all went well with him, and he walked according to God's mind; God sustaining him in it; but as he departed from it, sorrow and perplexity surrounded and embarrassed him. The counsel given to Noah, however well apprehended and valued by Abram, could in no wise have aided or guided him in the line in which he was called. That counsel had its own use; it spoke to him of how man was again set on the earth. It foreshadowed the millennium and the state alone in which, God being owned as in covenant with the earth, man could be on it in ordered dignity and blessing. Any given counsel is necessarily directly applicable to the time and circumstances in which it is given; or it would not be.

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appropriate counsel. Now divine counsel is ever pre-eminently appropriate; and not only so, but it is always suited for any case which may arise, similar in circumstance to that for which it was first given. Thus the counsel to Noah indicates the only true one for man as man on earth, and will be fulfilled in the millennium, when Satan will be bound, and the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; while that to Abram is with a different intent, and distinctly suited for the state of things which it was intended to meet.

When God called Abram to separate himself from the untoward world around; —from the confusion which had sprung up because His previous counsel had been neglected, He gave him a counsel which was the only suited one then, and at all times, for the godly one separating from this world unto God. However much he knew of God's mind as to other periods in the history of man, no other than that now given could have placed him according to God's mind in

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his own day. As he observed it, he rose above the difficulties of his position; but as he wavered from it, he became involved in them. By the strength and guidance of this counsel, he passed from Haran and came into the land of Canaan, not knowing whither he went. At least two hundred miles are traversed, and every difficulty surmounted, in obedience to it, for "into the land of Canaan they came."

However, when there arose a famine in the land, he swerved from the counsel by which he had been conducted thither, and went down into Egypt; and though in a little time, through mercy, he returned to his true path, all through the remainder of his course he suffered for this, his first departure from a strict adherence to the counsel of God given to him for his day. When simply walking according to it, he can take the dignified place of superiority to all circumstances. He can say to Lot, "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right, then I will go to the left."

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While walking according to the mind of God, and in the strength of His counsel, all sides of the land are alike to him; and God in His grace establishes his faith by unfolding to him the riches of His purposes respecting him. He is assured that he has done wisely in not contending with Lot as to any particular part of the land, for the whole was his. God says to him, "Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee." When Abram failed and suffered with reference to Ishmael, it was simply because he had departed from the counsel; but when he walked in the light of it, his only recognized possession was a burying place; nor would he allow his son to return to Syria, or to marry any one who was not prepared to follow him fully in the path in which the counsel conducted him. Eventually his posterity had so neglected the counsel that they were obliged, because of a grievous famine, to retire from the land and go down into Egypt. By degrees this had come about; in

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various ways the counsel had been unheeded or despised. Isaac is first deceived by self-indulgence, instead of walking by faith; next, Jacob, because of wilfulness, in fear flies from the land; and though he returned, his sons, in the end, in open rebellion against God, reckless of His counsel by which their fathers had entered the land, are driven to abandon it.

Let us note in passing on, that while God may give much other instruction it will always be found to be subsidiary to the one leading counsel which marked and determined the calling. It was thus with regard to Abram and his descendants, and so it is in any and every time.

Now the counsel to Moses was, "I am come down to deliver my people out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people out of Egypt." (Ex. iii.

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8—10.) This was God's call, and the light for the day, for it was His mind and will for His people. As Moses walked according to this counsel, he was successful and superior to the difficulties of the hour. When he swerved from it, from any cause whatever, be it personal incompetence, or the unbelief of the people, or the power of Egypt; no matter what it was that checked or hindered him; in proportion as he swerved from it, or hesitated, he *failed*. No other, no former counsel, could have guided or helped him in his day and service. In that now given he must abide for blessing and victory; and all the weakness and disaster which befell Israel on their journeyings to the land, is traceable to their departure from this counsel. Eventually they murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer. They refused to follow the counsel of God and were in consequence condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness, till all the men of war had died.

The counsel given to Joshua (Joshua i. 1—10) is a repetition of part of that

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committed to Moses. He is called to be strong and very courageous in completing that which Moses had not perfected; and as to "the law which Moses my servant commanded thee, TURN NOT FROM IT to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." Part of the counsel given to Moses had been accomplished; so that what remained to be carried out is given afresh to Joshua, as that suited for the emergency in which he found himself; and his history tells us what unlimited success and blessing attended him while he observed it, and the reverses which Israel sustained whenever they edged away from it. In chapter xxiii. Joshua before his death reiterates it to the judges and officers. The land had been so far entered and divided; but only in the observance of the *full* counsel given to Moses could the restful possession of it be maintained. Alas! how incomplete was this observance from the very first, we learn at Bochim (Judges ii. 1—4); but in the measure in which the counsel was followed "all the days of

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Joshua and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua," proportionate blessing and rest were ensured; while the subsequent neglect of it was the cause of all the sorrow and misery that ensued, as the history of the Judges, Kings, and Prophets testifies. The one simple service or labour of every faithful man in Israel was to lead back the people into the line marked out by this counsel, and every even partial return to it was attended with blessing and a renewal of divine favour. What gave ability and success to a David or a Josiah, an Ezra or a Nehemiah, a Daniel or a Haggai, but simply purpose of heart to walk according to the counsel long before given, and which was gradually neglected and at last utterly despised by their nation? No new counsel was given: it was still the same as that imparted to Moses and Joshua. Failure had not invalidated the counsel. The moment faith in God used it, it was found as blessed as ever; and it was also found to be the one *for the period*, and none other. Nehemiah's counten-

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ance told how his heart languished for God's inheritance, and Daniel betrayed how his heart lingered over the spot owned and loved of God on earth, when he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed with his window open toward Jerusalem. How encouraging to us is their devotedness and success!

But we must pass on to consider the next counsel given, which was altogether different. With this the ministry of John the Baptist opens. It is now, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and "he preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." In his day it would have been vain and out of place for any Jew to have excused himself from responding to this call on the plea of observing any previous counsel. The counsel now given was the only suited one to the time; and if not adhered to, there could be no divine deliverance from the difficulties of it. And thus it proved! "The publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John; but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the

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counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." The baptism itself was a declaration of separation from things as they were, so that, if accepted, it was not possible to return to any line of things previously existing. The counsel of God given at former times was suited instruction for those times, or similar ones; but it was not the light for the day of John the Baptist. Light for the day must be a guide for the day; and the counsel given by him was pre-eminently such. Consequently all who accepted it were blessed; while the hardened and self-sufficient rejected it against themselves.

But now came the fulness of all counsel, the Son from heaven! "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not; but as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God." He could say, "This is my beloved Son, *hear him.*" Everything now turns on this. "This is the will of God, that ye believe on him whom God hath sent." "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your

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sins." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "I am the light of the world." In the presence of that Light what other counsel or light could avail, or be any guide for the hour? All other counsels put together would have been inadequate and unsuited for the Lord's day on earth. He Himself was the way, the truth, and the life; and hence, no after counsel can be apart from Him, as we shall see. He must evermore continue to be the one who is to determine our way and course here; that is to say, His relation to earth must necessarily henceforth determine and define our relation to it. When He was on earth, as set forth in the gospel narrative, He was the light of the world, and every one who acknowledged and followed Him, the Simeons and the Annas, the disciples and the faithful women, &c., did not walk in darkness, but had the light of life. They knew of His doctrine whether it was of God. When He ascended on high His relation to earth was altered. He took a new position, and according

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to this, must the way and course of His people be directed. His relation to earth determines our relation to it; and therefore, when in the day of His ascension He took a new position towards it; that which He had when present on earth, could no longer be a guide or leading counsel for His people. As ascended on high, He imparted a new order, and imposed on the faithful here a new course and testimony which, with the Lord's help, we may hope to consider in the next paper.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

WHAT is a Christian? is a more important inquiry than we generally admit; for though God in His grace and mercy fashions us, His children, according to His own large thoughts and purposes, yet our walk and sense of what we are, must depend on the accuracy of our apprehensions of His

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thoughts and purposes about us. We can never have a just idea of God's purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus for us, by observing either the working of grace within ourselves, or by watching the effects of it in saints. In order to acquire any adequate idea of God's purpose I must study scripture testimony about it. Nay, if I am not continually keeping before my mind His thought and purpose, now accomplished in the Son of His love, I shall lose any true conception of it, and begin to leaven it in my mind either with what I see in myself or in others, even the best; and, from the effects, be induced to judge of this or that quality as being Christian, and as defining the term when it is neither. It will not be at once admitted that the very best effects I know of grace do not afford me an adequate idea of what the new man is according to God's mind. The higher anything is in its quality the less can you get a full idea of it by observing it when its qualities are immatured, for as such they are compromised and marred. I may learn the *good* of

qualities in practice, as it is said, "By their fruits shall ye know them;" but the qualities which produce the good fruits must be learned in their *origin*. And I must learn the new man in his origin, as in the mind of God, and not from the imperfect (however good) evidence of it, which I see in the earthen vessel; for *there* all the qualities of grace suffer, and are more or less distorted, because of that with which they come in contact; nor in any case can I see a perfect development of it there. Can I get a full idea of a man from beholding a babe? I see in it what I expect to grow into a man; but unless I know what a man is in himself I could not, from seeing a babe, predicate what he would grow into. My idea of the babe's future is entirely derived from my previous knowledge of what a matured man is. Just in the same way I could form no idea of a beautiful bird from its unfledged young. Doubtless, it will grow into all the beauty of the parent, but I must know the parent first or I can acquire no idea

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of its attractive future from its present appearance; but the reverse. How then can I expect to form any just conception of what the new man is if I confine my estimate of it to what I see of its development in weak humanity? I must learn what Christ is, and what God's purpose about me in Christ is, in order to get a clear, full idea of it. And the simple thing, and the only wise and helpful thing, is to get from Scripture what this, His thought and purpose about us, is. This is what I desire, with the Lord's help, to present, though deeply feeling my inability to do so adequately. But I am induced to make the attempt because it may stimulate inquiry into a point of truth on which I fear much ignorance exists; and where such is the case, it must necessarily be followed by damage to the soul both in walk and enjoyment.

The first great fact to be noted is that the new man is a *new creation*. (Eph. iv. 24.) Now, creation cannot be what the word conversion in itself implies. True, a person in using the term "converted,"

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may mean that such a one is newly created; but the word converted really conveys the idea of a change effected by altering the thing that is, into something else. This is not new creation. A new creation is a thing *formed anew*, and not from anything else. This must be simple and definite in the mind; for all the structure which is reared on an inaccuracy *here* must impart grievous imperfection to the whole. And I believe there is great want of definiteness here in our minds; because if I admit decidedly that I have begun by a new creation, a new birth, and that on inconceivably higher ground, how could I superadd anything to it from an old creation?

Many who admit that they must (as a new creature) be born of water and of the Spirit, have very imperfect notions of the distinctiveness of it from their old creation. If this be seen and acknowledged, all the rest of the marvellous counsel of God becomes comprehensible to faith, and is accepted by it. But if there be any indistinctness here,

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everything connected with us as a new man is necessarily obscure and unaccountable. The new birth is in no way connected with the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is a new creation, originated by the Spirit in the soul, and by water (the word of God's grace), because of the bloodshedding of Christ. The incorruptible seed of the word of God declares that we are born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; and the eye of faith resting on Christ, assures the heart in the knowledge and joy of life—everlasting life in Him. Every man in Christ is a new creation, having eternal life in Him who is our life. We must be clear about this first beginning; so clear that, in the complications which occur from our flesh intermeddling with the projects and desires of the new man, we may be able to resolve them by starting with the fact, that there is no link at all between them. The new is entirely new, and the old must be marked off as

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having no part at all with it. Though we live in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. As I now belong to Christ, I have no right or rule for anything I do but as He enjoins me.

First, then, I must see and fully maintain that I, as a member of Christ, am a new creation, born of water and of the Spirit, and living now by Christ, the eternal life which was with the Father. This is the first and simplest element of my existence; and, secondly, I require to see how God has set aside the flesh in order that I may comprehend what He has substituted in its place, as entirely beyond and apart from that which He has set aside.

When man's wickedness became great on the earth, God declared to Noah: "The end of all flesh is come before me." This, though foreshadowed by the flood, the then judgment of God on all flesh, was not really fulfilled till the death of Christ, and then mercy also rejoiced over judgment. He gave His flesh for the life of the world. "The bread," He says, "which I will give is

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my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." God's own Son came into this world, born of a woman: "Inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same;" holy in nature and perfect in life, well pleasing unto His Father in all His ways. But He will not abide alone: He will die and bring forth much fruit. "And I if I be lifted up from the earth," He says, "will draw all men unto me." He is put to death in the flesh. He bears the judgment that is on the first man; He, not any way chargeable with our guilt, bears the judgment of it, bows His head and gives up the ghost; and at the very time yields the ~~fat~~ — the excellency, His own divine excellency. Hence He is raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead; having in His death set aside that in which we were held. The flesh was weak in itself to answer to the claims of God, and judgment had fallen on it because of unbelief; but the Son of God

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is manifested in the flesh, bears the judgment on man — accepts it. Personally He did stand apart from it; but as apart from it, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. If He had not been a man, He could not have died for man; and if He were not exempt from any, even the *slightest*, link to man's sin, He could not have been the vicarious sacrifice for sin. But He came from God to remove the sin; God's lamb to take away the sin of the world. He tasted death for every man: "In that he died, he died unto sin once." In Himself He bore the judgment on man, and terminated the flesh, the first man, as a recognized existence before God. Hence, though we have known Him after the flesh, henceforth know we Him no more. Old things are passed away, all things are become new; and in the resurrection, He is the Head of a new race. As in the one, the first Adam, all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The completeness of the termination of the first Adam in the

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death of Christ is of all importance, because if feeble in our apprehension of this, we must be feeble in our apprehension of the new place in which we are set, and we shall be hampered and hindered in learning it, and of course in walking according to it. The first man, through Satan's wiles, in unbelief marred all. The Son of God is manifest in the flesh, bears the judgment that rests on man, rises from the dead, and from thence inaugurates a new race. The old Adam is set aside, and entirely a new man is set up in its place before God. Now a member of Christ is of this new man and nothing else. We have put off in God's eye and purpose, through Christ, the old man and put on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Little as we can take it in, and how little, alas ! all will admit, we must see ourselves now in Christ at the other side of death; which at one and the same moment was the judgment on us as men, and the termination of our existence as men before God: so that "the

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life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." How the old man is to be dealt with, now that we are in Christ (the beginning of the creation of God) will, D.V., be the subject for further inquiry; but we cannot too simply and distinctly see and maintain that through the death of Christ it is totally set aside; and that the new man in Christ Jesus is endowed and enriched through the Spirit, with the properties and virtues of His life, as members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. We shall have bodies of glory like unto His body of glory. And now He is Himself by faith dwelling in us, and making us to know the supremacy of Himself as our Head amid all the opposing and hostile circumstances which encompass us here on earth.

The new man is a part of Christ, of the same order with His blessed self; no intermixture of the former man

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whatsoever. It is in Christ Jesus, unto whose image I am now being conformed, that He should be the firstborn among many brethren. On the ground of redemption I am born of water, which is the word of God, and of the Spirit; and believing in Christ, I live by Him; and know in my soul, through the Spirit, the blessed properties of His life—a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

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OUR POSITION

God, out of the spontaneous feelings of His own heart, has come in and taken out from among this world certain persons who were devil-possessed, led captive, full of evil passions. God *has* come in, taken them up, revealed Himself to them, and made them the Body of which His Son, seated at His own right hand, is the Head in heaven. The Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, is now

on the throne of the Father—of the Highest: and God has down here on earth an answer to what He is up there. He is making good His name on earth, in spite of all that Satan can do. What grace! God is in heaven; His Son Jesus is set down at His right hand; the Holy Ghost is here, and here in you and in me, He makes good that which is the answer to the position of His own Son as Head of the Body. This is grace passing understanding: grace which for height passes measure, for it reaches to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: grace which for depth comes down under all our ruin, and which reached to us when we were—what?—rolled round and round by Satan, like withered leaves in autumn. And here *in us* He makes good this answer. *To us* He says, ‘You are the proof that my Son is sitting up here as Head.’ And this is the position in which we are to “STAND” (see Eph. vi. 14): “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,” &c.

Here is our position; and in stating

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it, grace assumes that the hearts are all right with God. Oh ! when one sees how God takes this for granted, how the heart must desire to live as constrained by the love of Christ. How ready we are to be taken up with a hundred objects; with any save that *One* with which the Holy Ghost thrills in us ! Our houses are unpurged, ourselves unjudged; but still He sees us as the living members of His own Son, the living Head; and the soul is supposed to have a character suited to the sons of such a Father—to vessels sealed by the Spirit. Oh ! how it shames us to see what the Church of God *was* ; how single-eyed, esteeming beyond every object that which was dear to God; seeking to be Christ-bearers in the world ! God sees how decrepit we are; but He looks at us *now* as connected with the Son at His right hand. How far have we a single eye ? No eye is single but that which sees God continually. How little one finds in souls the knowledge of the true God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, even among those who

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make a profession of knowing it! having received the truth as to the mercy and grace of God; but the imagination may play with truth which is not *in the heart*.

OUR DUTY.

ONE cannot help feeling that there ought to be a chivalry about us now beyond anything ever known in the Church of God of later times. Luther did not get beyond justification. Like, in the woman in Luke vii., there was great true-hearted devotedness, but all to distinguish Christ on earth.

He never got farther; even Melancthon would have reformed the national church. We now profess to know Christ as the One with whom we are quickened (quicken is always used, I believe, for the whole work of life including the body), and hence we ought to declare, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." We should distinguish Christ by renouncing it for His burial (like the woman in John xii. who devoted the most precious thing

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she had to His burial), or in other words by being dead to it altogether, because He has died out of it. This truth necessarily imposes on us a much more chivalrous and self-renouncing path than that of Luther or Melancthon. We have not merely to contend with indulgences or gross corruptions, but we have to brave the coldness and distance of "our own"—the saints—who refuse what we seek to enforce; that the one living *by* Christ now, is also crucified *as to himself with Christ*. If one term of the proposition be true, the other is true also. Weaken or limit the scope of the one, and you must weaken and limit the scope of the other. How many say that they have Christ as their life who instead of seeking to be as crucified ones here, argue and contend for acknowledgment in the flesh here in position and self-gratification; satisfied so long as there be no degradation of man *naturally*, which is their standard. Now this is a great and growing evil. The truth as to grace is increasing, and is pressed with such

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clearness that there is general acceptance of it; but the great testimony which should flow from an acceptance in power is nowhere to be seen. "Their god is their belly," could be said with too much truth of the mass of the professing people of God. That is to say, their own tastes rule more than God's mind. The saints have to be warned and preserved against being legal, as we see in Romans and Galatians; but there is another and a worse form of evil; and that is, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness; practically denying that in the flesh we were crucified with Christ, while professing that we live by Him; and this we know will be the final form of evil in and among the people of God on earth.

There are two distinct lines of truth which require to be presented with special distinctness. The first is, What is God's thought in saving us? This thought He has consummated in His Son, and the scope of it we require to have before our souls. Every priest in Israel did not comprehend the temple

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and its furniture; but the temple and its furniture presented the mind of God about Israel, and each, at least, saw what he was called to attain to. Now, in the present day, the truth is lowered to the measure of man's need; hence, if the need be met, which grace does, the convert makes no advance; he rests in the satisfaction of his need, instead of being directed to the scope of God's thought, which only *begins* at his need. Where would souls be put if they were simply and definitely instructed in Christ Jesus and Him crucified; connected by faith with the living One, who was here crucified, and whose death terminated man in the flesh?

The second line of truth so needed is, the place and walk incumbent on us who have received Christ here on earth—the nature and character of that place; for it is not in the glory that we shall set forth the power of the risen Christ; it is *here*, where He died, and where we are dead, that we ought to display the properties and virtues of Christ risen from among the dead.

OUR MOTIVE.

INTELLIGENCE in truth depends on the spiritual state of the soul. It is quite impossible, before you have apprehended your union with Christ, that you should comprehend what the effects of that union are. *Now* we are hid with Him. When He shall appear, all shall be put in order, all shall suit His presence. Now all is confusion. The world has cast out Christ; but He has gone up to the right hand of God, and is gathering His saints until He appears, shews Himself to them, and puts all straight. The moment Christ shews Himself, He must have the upper hand of all evil. It was a matter of promise to the saints of old. Would it be your delight if He fulfilled it? If we are settling ourselves down here, we shall not desire that day; we shall not look for His appearing. We have to go through this world, an immense system of which Satan is the head; but our hearts ought to have communion with God; consciousness of Christ's separation from

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it all, and of our association with Christ Himself. Now we have the same as He, all but the glory. You cannot separate the Head from the members. There is nothing which Christ takes up but is ours (suffering is thereby ours also). You cannot separate Christ and all He has from the saints. He is in them and with them, and when He shall appear, they shall be like Him. Ever since the Holy Ghost came down from heaven, this is our place. One thing that characterizes Scripture is that the highest motives are supplied for the meanest things. Servants are exhorted not to purloin because—see Titus ii. 10—14. Brethren not to go to law—because they shall judge the world. In the most minute and common-place actions the coming is brought in as a motive; nothing less is contemplated, but that the very thing which moves all actions in the saints, should be that they have, and are to have, Christ's presence.

The Lord Jesus having come and reconciled us with Himself, all His object was to set us in the same place

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with Himself, and *nothing short of this*. You cannot put Him in a place in which you do not necessarily, and in virtue of it, put me. And what is the consequence? I have this hope: the realization of this union. Associated, identified, mixed up, with Christ. You cannot separate the two. The world and Christ are now at issue. Christ succumbs as it were; He does not assert His rights. But by and by the world will have to succumb, and it shall be manifested then that the Church had its place in Him before and beyond the scene in which it was to be gathered was created. Our hope is that which flows necessarily from connection with Himself, the being with Him for ever; connected with Himself everlastingly. He will come again to receive us unto Himself. And what more? Nothing? "Where I am there shall ye be also." "For ever with the Lord." *That is all!* And that is full blessedness.

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PART III.

AT our Lord's ascension the word is (Acts i. 11) "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Such was the counsel for that day, evidently different to what it was when He was on earth. It was no longer to follow Him as the disciples did on earth; or to adopt relations similar to those which they held to Him in His earthly ministry. Such could in no wise be in company with His mind, or as being led by His counsel now. And yet it is here that all the error and confusion in the present day, and from the days of the apostles downwards, have occurred. The authority for any assumed course is made to be, not that which is enjoined by Christ's present position, but that at some other time He gave such and such a direction. How, I ask, would the counsel which I should give to a mariner in deep seas

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answer for a landsman? or how far would what suits an ox be suitable for an eagle? Christ on earth and Christ in heaven cannot be of like counsel to His people; for, as I have said, His present relation to the earth determines the relation of His people, and, therefore, though He is personally the same, His relation being changed, His counsel for them must be changed accordingly. If the heart be simple, it will readily accept that His relations to things here should determine everything for it. Mary Magdalene accepted it, when at His word she forbore to touch Him or to renew her former association with Him on earth; while at His bidding she could surrender His presence, dear to and valued by her as it was, to announce to His disciples His ascension to His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

From the ascension to the death of Stephen, the counsel was determined by Christ's own position with regard to things on earth. He offers Himself again to Israel, and the testimony of

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the twelve is that the times of refreshing were to come from the presence of the Lord, and that God would send Jesus who before was preached unto them. (See Acts ii., iii.) They announce that this risen man God hath made both Lord and Christ. He is the real David, and being "by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." The apostles, as we know, from their question to the Lord (chap. i. 6), were expecting the restoration of the kingdom; and the Lord does not tell them that such expectation is in vain, until it has been proved in vain. Therefore so long as the Lord had not been rejected in His *resurrection* (in the days of His flesh He had been so already), as the One to bring in the sure mercies of David, His servants were working here in keeping with His mind while still offering Himself as such, His position being as one ready to return, if they would receive Him. This determines their testimony and is the counsel

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for their day. True we see at the same time the Church formed, the Holy Ghost forming the saints in company. But until Christ is fully rejected by the Jewish nation at the death of Stephen, the counsel takes this shape, and all His servants are calling on Israel, not to refuse the testimony by the Holy Ghost of Christ's title and readiness to come and reign, and of the blessings which will flow from it. Christ is ascended and offering to return to the earth, and according to this (the counsel for that day) the saints are looking to Him, the ascended One and expecting Him to come and reign. This is their testimony and such it continues to be until the death of Stephen. Then, by the deliberate act of a council of the Jews, the witness of this testimony is stoned. (Acts vi. 12.) "The people, the elders, and the scribes came upon him (Stephen), and caught him, and brought him to the council;" and though they saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel, after they had heard a rehearsal of God's patient, merciful ways, "They cried out with a

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loud voice and stopped their ears, and ran on him with one accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him, and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul." Now is consummated the rejection of Christ by His own nation on earth. The citizens here in council openly and violently put to death the witness of His ascension, and of His title as also of His readiness to return and assume the place of king and leader of His people on earth. This desperate and deliberate act declares unequivocally the nation's rejection of Christ. Hence Christ is no longer offering Himself to them as He was then when standing at the right hand of God. From henceforth we shall find that He is sitting down; and Stephen, instead of expecting Christ to come in His glory and reign, has gone (being stoned, and rejected from the earth) to be with Jesus in the glory.

Now Christ's position as to earth being altered, the counsel subsequently is a different one; and hence Saul is called by Jesus from the glory to be a

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“minister and a witness of those things which he *had seen* and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.” Jesus in the glory, the source and spring of all blessing to His people, supreme over everything on earth, is now the counsel for the day. I am not now, like Stephen, expecting Him to come in glory to earth, but first knowing Him as my Saviour in the glory, and being in a recognized position there through Him, I am expecting to be there with Him; and next, knowing Him as Head of His body the Church, I walk through this scene (as I have faith in Him), in His strength and power. Stephen was at first looking for glory to come with Christ; and at his death was taught by the Spirit that there was a place for him in the glory. Saul of Tarsus on the contrary is at first introduced into the glory, and there Jesus is first revealed to him. He has a Saviour in the glory and to that glory as “the mark” (Phil. iii.) he is, throughout his course here pressing unto, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ

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Jesus. Christ in the glory is the first thing revealed to Saul, and that, not only as a Saviour, but as Head over all things to the Church which is His body. Now this is His relation to His people here, and this relation determines our relation to Him. And this then is the counsel for this day, and must continue to be the counsel until He comes; until He moves from the right hand of God, when necessarily the counsel will be altered accordingly. It is plain and self-evident that if our Lord's relation to His people is that of Head over all things, that it simply and distinctly determines our relation to Him. Hence the apostle attributes all the slipping away of the Colossians into Judaism and philosophy to the fact of their "not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together increaseth with the increase of God." How could any soul, knowing Christ as his Saviour in the glory—the glory being the place of introduction—the home of his Saviour and therefore

the hope of the gospel—how could such a one, I repeat, realizing the wondrous and blessed fact of Christ's present relation to His saints on earth as Head, drop down to any former revelation and regard it as the counsel for the day? How could Christ on earth — how could He as the ascended One coming in glory to the Jewish nation, as Peter announced and expected Him—how could knowing Him in either of these relations guide or help souls in a day when He had taken a very different and still more blessed relation to His people? Could any one, knowing Him in the high and blessed relationship in which He is now, revert or return to one which would place him greatly out of the way and current of His present mind and interests? If I do not see Christ in His present relationship to His people, it is evident that I cannot be in the counsel for the day. Surely the great thing for me to ascertain is what is His relation to His people. If He be our Head in heaven, then it is plain this must paramountly be maintained. It is

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clear that I cannot in any way follow out His mind or do His will, if I do not accord myself to the relation in which He stands to His people, nor can I be in fellowship with the Holy Ghost or know His help or countenance. No relationship could be more definite or more comprehensible than that of Head. Hence, as the apostle tells us, "increase unto God" is the result of holding the Head. Every difficulty must be resolved, every power surmounted, if I have a Head in heaven. If this be true and maintained, no greater favour or privilege could be conferred on the child of God; but as it is a simple *fact*, and (as the last and highest revelation made known) necessarily the counsel for the day, there can be no way of escaping the difficulties of the day, if this truth be not seen, or if it be overlooked; whereas when it is seen, the way becomes simple and clear. If I were to seek to observe most sedulously every other truth of God, still without this one, I should find that I had no clue by which to thread my way through the

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present labyrinth; whereas, if I simply and faithfully adhere to the leading counsel—the counsel for the day—I shall be sustained by the Spirit, as in fellowship with Him, and find that the strength and grace and wisdom of Him who is above everything is communicated to me, and that the relationship of Head, which is so often named and spoken of, as if only a name, and unimportant, is on the contrary a wonderful, magnificent, inconceivable reality. O! how little we realize it! If we did realize it in any measure, how effectually we should find this, the counsel for this day, suited and qualified in every sense, to resolve every difficulty, and to make us superior to every force and hindrance in our course here for Christ. But instead of this truth being really accepted as the counsel for the day, there is on every side a departure from it. Many who preach the gospel, even true hearted and devoted men, do not start their gospel from the glory. They have no believing sense of Christ's present relation to His people here on earth.

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They are not in the counsel for the day, and all the formal arrangements of religious minds utterly ignore the reality and efficacy of this great relationship. "All they of Asia" turned away from the counsel of the day. (2 Tim. i. 15.) The churches in Asia, as we find by Revelation ii. iii., each in a particular way lost sight of Christ, and consequently lost sight of His Headship; and hence all their decrepitude and failure. And thus, we hear at one time one point of truth revived, and a new sect formed on it; and again, another point of truth, and another sect formed on it; but neither having laid hold of the counsel for the day, which alone is qualified to meet every question, and solve every difficulty, and carry one above every force.

The Lord lead our souls to meditate solemnly and earnestly on His counsel, and to know in ourselves His wondrous way and favour toward us.

SYMPATHY AND FELLOWSHIP.

THE great and simple thing for the soul to apprehend is the purpose and desire of God for it. The eternal life, in the person of His Son, given to us, places us, as we find (1 John i.), in fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. This communion is the purpose and desire of God, and the range and level of eternal life in Christ. It is important that we should keep simply before our hearts that nothing lower than this is the desire and purpose of God for us, for it is not merely *what I need* that should be the limit and aim of my desire. What God in His grace and love has secured for me, according to His own mind, is the only true limit of it; and in accordance with this the apostle says, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Col. i. 9.) The "fatted calf" is the limit determined of God.

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He would have me in communion with Himself, participating in His own counsels and interests. "Let us eat and be merry" is the desire and purpose of His heart; and the simple question with us should be, have we reached this—God's purpose and desire for us? Have we apprehended in any degree the blessedness and elevation of so knowing ourselves in the eternal life in Christ, that we commune with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ? Now the first thing is to see that this is His desire, and the property of the life He has given us. This will work aim and desire in us; for if we have not reached it, we must feel that we are below the purpose of God, and the vigour of life. When once we have His desire thus distinctly before us, we shall find that nothing, however blessed or useful to ourselves, can displace it; and that in fact much of our remissness in not seeking it is that we have not seen, or are not impressed with a sense of His desire that we should attain to it. This is mainly the cause of the little idea of communion there is

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now among saints. While they are not moved to seek this wondrous elevation, even communion with the thoughts and concerns of the living God, they engross and satisfy their hearts in seeking the sympathy of Christ, and the care of God respecting their own circumstances and concerns on earth. A soul often thinks it has reached the highest point, if it has the assurance and sense of Christ's sympathy with it in its trials and sorrows down here. If one can rest in unbroken consciousness of the Father's tender care, one seeks no more, and any break or disturbance of these blessings is accompanied with distress of soul, until the trial is removed and the knowledge of His favour is assured in one's personal circumstances. There is an occupation with things here with reference to oneself, and things are not looked at with reference to God. If there were communion with God, every thing we did, every arrangement publicly, domestically, or personally, would, according to the accuracy of our communion, bear a divine stamp. Fellow-

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ship with the world makes us accord with the fashion of the world, and hence it is only by the renewing of the mind, entering into communion with God, that we can be transformed from the world, and this would take place if we were seeking communion. How many are not seeking it! They are seeking the succour and care of God in their own personal concerns; and in coming before the Lord, they look for restoration rather than for communication of His mind; hence, there is so little growth in the knowledge of Him and of His ways. They know the blank and unhappiness of wandering, and on seeking Him (blessed be His grace!) they find Him, and are cheered and content; but how far below the desire of God for them is this! How it falls short of the range of eternal life when its vigour is known and enjoyed! Hence they are never in the *fulness* of joy. Their joy, satisfaction, or rest, is limited to the sense they have of present succour and knowledge of His interest for them. Great and blessed as this is,

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it is, nevertheless, incomparably below God's purpose for us. The difference is, that in the one case Christ sympathizes with us in our trials and sorrows, and we know it; our Father cares and provides for us, and we rest in it; but in the *other*, we are led in the power and property of the life which He has given us into the circle of His thoughts and interests. How immeasurably greater and more blessed is this! And how could any soul, enjoying this, lose for a moment the sense of His sympathy and care? When in communion we *must* have the sense of His sympathy; but when engrossed with the sympathy, we may miss the level of communion. The highest point commands all the lower ones, but the lower cannot command the higher.

It is true that the way we grow into fellowship or communion is by first knowing the Lord's sympathy, if we are absolutely dependent on it. The queen of Sheba is an illustration of this. She communed with Solomon of "all that was in her heart, and there

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was not anything hid from the king which he told her not." And *then*, having poured out all her heart, and disposed of it, as it were, she grows into interest and fellowship with Solomon in all *his* ways and works. When she had seen his wisdom, and his house, and his table, and his servants, &c., there was no more spirit in her. She was overwhelmed with wonder and praise.

So also with Mary in John xi. In the hour of nature's desolation she learns the sympathy and thought of Christ for her, and resting in Him as to *that*, she does not stop there, but advances into the fullest fellowship; for the next scene in which we find her she is anointing Him for His burial, and this was perfect fellowship with Him, and with His relation to all things at that moment. The sympathy of Christ, when we are shut up to it, promotes fellowship. God's care and concern for me in my concerns, when rested in, fills me more with God and then I have a higher level than my own wants

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and difficulties. And if I go on in company with Him, how blessedly shall I see all resolved, while, myself being in the line of His eternal counsels and glory, God's purpose of grace and love is accomplished, and my joy is full !

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

CO-OPERATION IN WORK.

THE thought or the practice of co-operating in work for Christ, while there is not communion with the truth which He has communicated, implies that I can separate His work from His mind.

Communion may exist with very partial knowledge. Communion with another is common mind with him, while the scope and extent of it is according to knowledge. My child and I may have communion to a certain point. I know all he knows; he only knows a part of what I know; but so

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far as he does know and is engaged with it he has communion with me and I with him. So as to co-operation in Christ's work. To say that it can exist without communion in truth, implies that two can engage in Christ's work without common ideas of Christ; but it is not a question of the extent or fulness of the idea. If my idea of Him be of the same order, I am after all, however feeble, in communion with the most advanced and apprehensive; for the greater includes the lesser if it be of its own order. I do not rise up to its fulness, but I am not occupied with anything *not of it*, or *apart from it*. If I am occupied with any thing apart from it, then communion is at an end. I am occupied in my mind with that which is not of His mind, and this must necessarily damage my service for Him. The question narrows itself to this—Can I preach the gospel in conjunction with another who sees quite differently from me respecting the Church of God? We agree as to the way, and the necessity of salvation: can we work to-

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gether while we differ about the Church and its order and place on earth? I should say No; for though there is an agreement in one point between us, we are in fact working for different ends, so that the agreement loses its value. We preach the gospel together and souls are saved, but as to the question, "What is Christ's mind for the saved ones as walking here for Him on earth?" we are entirely at variance. One as an evangelist remembers that he belongs to Christ's body on earth (see Eph. iv); the other does not; and if this be a matter of indifference to us, we make our service the link between us, and not the mind of Christ. If Christ's mind be really my aim, I could not happily co-operate with one who would lead His people into a form bearing the name of the Church, but which I know to be contrary to His mind. Is it then Christ's mind that I seek for co-operation in work—help from one who supports and advocates that which is not His mind? Surely if I am walking with Christ, His mind must be what I seek,

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and nothing lower. Any one who has the same end in view—any one who is following His mind, however darkly and distantly, I can happily co-operate with; but if His mind be my aim, and nothing lower, however good, it is evident that I could not co-operate with one avowedly and practically committed to act contrary to His mind. There could be no communion between us. The supposed communion was that we desired together to win souls, by presenting the grace of God. If both were really and simply confined to this, and were committed to *nothing* else; if neither had light or thought as to what Christ would have us do on earth; and if each were quite willing and ready to be taught what His mind was, then there could be co-operation. But when there is co-operation in work *without* communion in truth, the work is made the object of communion, and not the mind of Christ. And thus Christ's servants are reduced to the level of mere philanthropists, who co-operate with one another merely to promote a certain good for man.

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For instance, teetotalism is philanthropic co-operation after this order. All that is required in the co-operation is zeal and purpose in promoting a certain good. The simple and entire object is to promote sobriety, and it is no matter what are the sentiments of the co-operator, provided he earnestly and devotedly gives himself to the advocacy and promotion of teetotalism; which is the limit and end of the agreement and co-operation. Now this is the principle on which it is supposed in this day that one may co-operate with another in preaching the gospel, however wide and avowed may be their difference as to what is Christ's mind for His people on earth; and this principle implies that a certain good for man is the end and limit of the co-operation, and not the mind of Christ. But surely the mind of Christ *ought* to be the end and object of every servant of Christ. Where it is so, there can be co-operation with *any* one who seeks the *same end*, however distant such an one may be from a full knowledge of His mind.

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But this is a very different thing from essaying to agree with another about preaching the gospel, who at the same time avowedly supports and advocates what is contrary to Christ's mind. The question then entirely resolves itself into this: Is it man's gain or is it Christ's mind that is my end and object? If the latter, I can co-operate with any, however ignorant, who also makes His mind the end and object; but clearly not with one who ignores what His mind is, or who is supporting that which is contrary to His mind. I am debarred from communion and co-operation with such an one, not by his ignorance but by his wilfulness. An Apollos is ignorant, but he is not wilful. It is a very different thing to co-operate with an ignorant servant, and with one who is determined and committed to maintain his own system: with such an one I cannot co-operate for the purpose of effecting any good for man, if the end before me be the mind and service of my Lord and Master.

THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST.

IF we are the Church militant, whose soldiers are we? Is it with us conflict or pleasure? How far is the word laid on our hearts as the spring of the soul? How far are we counting that all connected with Satan is shortly to be bruised? But nothing shall be bruised that is connected with Christ the Son of God. *Now* warfare must be exercised. He has broken your bonds that you may be free to go on in His service; it will not endure for ever; there will be a blessed contrast, but now we are servants, learning to endure. What, then, is the provision made for service? "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." It is only lately in this country that we have begun to understand the worth of the girdle; the heavy weights of railways have taught us something of its worth and use. In foreign countries it is much counted on for gathering up the strength, and increasing it, and letting people know what they can do. It is just so with

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truth to a Christian, it comes searchingly *home* "about the loins:" it surrounds us, while it tells of His grace. The word lets us know what is true according to God and what is not. Now if you have the word close round about you, you will find it uncommonly searching. The eye of Christ was on the word when Satan tested Him in the wilderness. 'This (said He) is not consistent with truth. I am not *bound* there.' See the specious attempt of the adversary to *mis-state* truth, and to bring out thereby some single feeling for *self*; but he could not find in Christ's heart one single feeling for Himself and not for God, whether the question was as to what He was as man, or as to circumstances around Him. Whatever it was, the deliverance to the Lord's mind was, "It is written." It was not that what Satan said was not scripture, but it was not truly applied to Him as a servant doing His Father's will. But the Lord was "girt about with truth;" He bowed to God's thoughts, and Satan passed quietly out. Where truth was, He was

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bound by it. It was not so with Peter; his loins were not girded, he was not a Nazarite; a single desire did not fill his soul. Hence there was weakness in his course. The great question is, What are God's thoughts about me? This searches all the secret walk and failure of our lives, for walking up to this is our power of testimony, and going on in His truth we shall find the strength of the Nazarite, and the separation of the Nazarite, so that none will be able to bind us as Samson was bound when he defiled the head of his consecration. If in any way we have been seeking self, we have lost the character of Nazarite soldiers; we have not the loins girt about with truth. The great thing for this day is to get the heart before God; to find ourselves out individually as to the God of truth. He looks at us now as connected with the Son at His right hand. He is the model He has given us; and when He looks into our hearts with power, it is to shew them *Christ*, in whom is all His delight, as the One with whose image He would have us stamped.

HOW TO WIN CHRIST.

(Phil. iii. 10.)

“THE sufferings of Christ” embrace in this place *all* that comes upon the faithful witness in the way of trial for His sake.

Paul had seen Christ in the heavens, and the sight had filled him with a sense of the utter worthlessness of every other object. In the light of that revelation the apostle had become a convicted sinner and his Pharisaism was turned inside out. His goodness and his privileges, to say nothing of his badness, became *loss* to him; not *lost* only, but a positive *loss*, being an object between his soul and Christ; so that he confessed “*what things* were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ.”

Moreover, at the time he wrote this epistle, after some thirty years of arduous labour and many many trials, he *still* said, “Yea doubtless and *I count* all things but loss,” &c. (Ver. 8.) He had not changed his mind, except to embrace “*all things*” instead of “*what*

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things." A blessed change this. The value and attractiveness of Christ reduced everything else to worse than nothingness—to "loss" and "dung."

But beyond all this renunciation on his own part of himself and of all things, the apostle had also SUFFERED the loss of all things; things, no doubt, lawful and profitable, as friendly helps, comforts, &c., and which he might have retained without wrong. The desire to be with Christ ruled the whole man, and seeing that Christ's pathway to the glory had been through suffering and rejection Paul would travel that way too, that he might be in fellowship with his Master in everything. There is a great deal more in the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ than self-renunciation; there is being renounced by *others*, despised, hated, cast out, &c., for His sake, as the blessed Lord had been. To be content to be thus renounced is the harder lesson of the two for us to learn. If we resist and resent it, we have not renounced ourselves truly. The knowledge of Christ Himself (not of His work only)

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and the power of His resurrection can alone enable the believer to follow Paul as he followed the Lord.

And what if all this be unto death? it is the joy of the believer to be thus like his Master. There is no proper object of christian ambition at the hands of the world other than this; and this Paul was actuated by, as if all the results of the work of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and being with Christ and like Christ, depended upon this complete surrender of *everything even unto death*.

THE DIVINE PATH.

..... "I have found the track of a divine Person in the world. I follow that, and I know where it ends."

O! wondrous grace, that such as I,
Rais'd by the self-same power as Thou,
May walk on earth, in life to die—
Through living union with Thee now.

Then teach me in Thy death to learn,
How Thou my heart from earth can'st wean;
Nature allures at every turn,
But Thou hast *died*, out of the scene!

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And sure the faithful heart must loathe
All that for which her Lord hath died;
Must long to feel His hand unclothe
This mortal part, in life to hide.

But 'tis my God and Father's will,
Who deigns to make my path His care,
That I this orbit should fulfil,
His grace and glory to declare.

Then count me worthy, Lord, to be
A lowly witness on this earth,
So wholly Thine, so kept by Thee,
To know and testify Thy worth.

O! holy joy, by man unseen,
This secret, sacred path to tread,
The footprints where my Lord hath been,
For Thee while here, and *to* Thee led.

For such, a gladsome path must be
E'en here (with Thee for Guide and Friend);
Learning Thine all-sufficiency,
We scarce could wish that path to end.

But end it will—where every sound
Shall be the echo of Thy praise.
The Bridegroom Thou! Thy Church around—
Reflecting all Thy glory's rays.

O! may Thy wisdom, love, and light,
Enclose me round in this dark scene.
What cloud (with Thee, my Lord, in sight)
Thy glory from my path can screen?

FRAGMENTS.

I do believe that the eye of God which looks down on us has still in it the tracings of what came out on the day of Pentecost. God then looked on a risen and ascended Christ in heaven, and gave the Holy Ghost with the light of the glory of God beaming in His face. He looks down now on us with all that carried in His eye.

In the place which suits love and where necessarily love sets me, there only can it fully enjoy me, and there only can I fully know it. Eating of the fatted calf is when the Father's love is fully known, in the Father's house, where alone it can fully enjoy itself.

The one who serves without sitting at the feet of Christ does what *he* thinks right; but it does not follow that this will be what Christ likes best. If I sit at His feet first, I *know* what He likes best: my service is according to His mind.

The eternal life is something that has a taste of another world about it, and carries its own evidence.

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Where there is conscience without subjection of heart to Christ, the effort of the exercised conscience will be to act rightly in a wrong place; but this cannot be, because the first step of faith must be to get into a right place.

God states what He will do, before I experience it. Experience only confirms to me what He has told me. I do not wait for experience to find it out. He commits Himself to me and invites me to prove Him.

It is not in the glory that we are to set forth the power of a risen Christ. It is *here*, where He died, and where we are dead, that we ought to display the properties and virtues of Christ risen from among the dead.

The life of Christ is our life. It is not merely life without a personality; but it is the life of a Person; so that the life has, so to speak, only to do in me what it has already done in Him.

LIGHT IN A DAY OF DIFFICULTY.

PART IV.

“FOLLOW THOU ME.”

THE simple desire of every faithful one, of every one who has tasted that the Lord is precious, is that he may walk here well-pleasing to Him, maintaining that place of testimony which He enjoins and expects. The heart which knows the love of Christ, and rests in it, feels how primary and necessary to it is the question, “How shall I follow Him?”

First, however, let me say, that if I am not resting in the love of Christ I cannot make His interests and His service here the simple object of my interest and attention. I cannot make another my object while my own interests are unassured, and this is the case more especially with the Lord, because the more I am awakened to a sense of who He is, and of the value of His grace to me, the more I am urged thereby to be in assured peace before Him. Many an one is seeking to do a service in order

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to reach this assured rest, instead of serving because he has reached it; and such an one betrays in his course and service (he cannot help doing so) that he is seeking something to accrue to himself—to his own soul, for his service—consequently there is not singleness of eye in what he does. There cannot be singleness of eye when Christ is not the one simple object before the soul. If I am in any degree an object to myself, if I need assured rest, this need must be paramount with me, and I cannot wholly devote myself to another. I must first be completely freed from all anxiety about myself. It will be found that when I am not simply resting in the assurance that I am Christ's object, the work and course I pursue, while often undertaken with great zeal, is really to effect something for myself instead of for Christ. It may not be anything so gross as to obtain a name or distinction among men, but it is to supply to myself a rest and assurance which hitherto I have not had. And hence the work is the source of my happiness

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and I judge of it by my success, and this ministers to myself. There is an effort to produce a certain effect on myself. My zeal may be exemplary and persistent, but necessarily I make the success or the effect on myself, the criterion of my work. Christ is not the simple object, nor can He be, unless I know that I am His object in the fulness of His love. When I know this, He is my object. Everything I do, and everything I engage in, is with distinct reference to Him.

When grace works in the soul, there is at once the sense that I ought to be here for Christ, and the desire to follow Him comes with any true purpose of heart. To follow the One who has loved me, must be the first and natural desire of grace in my soul. But if I am not quite assured of His love, the more I value it the more must I desire to be assured of it. And hence when I serve without assurance of it, I seek to reach a condition which is of paramount importance to me; and I engage in that which not only gives me

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respite from my anxiety, but which also carries me into a character of joy which quells for the time the restlessness which I experience because of my want of full rest in Christ's love. Surely if Christ were simply the object before souls, there could not be so much disparity of opinion as to what is our course and service in this day. We may serve any one, and that devotedly too, in two ways: either by doing what we think will suit such an one; that is, what apparently he needs, or, what we have discovered by patiently and earnestly waiting on him, he would like to have done. Martha and Mary respectively describe these two characters of service. Martha does what she deems necessary, and concerning the usefulness of which there could be no question raised; but she consults only her own judgment as to the fitness of it. She felt, and that truly, that there could be no doubt as to the usefulness of it, and she worked away until she was wearied with it, and cumbered by her much serving. She had not the rest in her

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Lord that Mary had. Mary sat at His feet and heard His word. It is important to remember that where there is rest of heart, the heart seeks to be guided in everything by the pleasure of Him whom it serves, and not merely to do that which every one sees is fit and necessary. If Christ be my object I am lost in Him, and His will and mind rule me. If I consult my own mind as to what I ought to do, I make *it* my guide, taking it for granted that He will accept it; but then it necessarily follows that *myself* must be more before me than He is. But how much more grateful to me, if my heart be true, to do what my Lord would like, would *choose* to have done, than merely what He may accept from me. Nothing can be more grateful to the heart than to feel it is doing what is suggested by the one to whom it is bound, or what will meet his mind, and not merely what it presses on him for approval or acceptance. What a difference! And this was just the difference between Mary and Martha. Mary teaches me

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the first step in *following the Lord* :
 “ To sit at his feet and hear his word.”

In a day of confusion such as this, nothing can be more important than that I should know my Lord's mind, as He has revealed it to me in His word, before I assume that this or that is what I ought to do. There is no rest of heart but near Him, and there is no distinct or clear apprehension of His mind but as I learn from Him. And the more we are with Him and hear His word, the more are we impressed with what pleases Him, and this determines how we should follow Him. Many things appear quite right for us to do when we are not in fellowship with His mind which we should not attempt to do if we were. Peter would not have drawn his sword in defence of his Lord if he had been in company with His mind (John xviii. 10), yet no doubt he felt he was doing a right and worthy act. The more complicated and distracting things are, the more simply and fully ought we to wait on the Lord and learn His mind, in order that by the

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counsel of it, and by the effect of association with Him, we may, in the confusion, avoid committing ourselves to anything uncongenial to Him. I believe much of what is done now-a-days, even with a good conscience and for Christ professedly, is done because it seems useful and necessary, rather than because the soul has been instructed from the word and association with the Lord, as to His pleasure, and the course He would have one pursue. In reality there is no serving the Lord without following Him: "If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am there also shall my servant be." If there be any cloud or distance between Him and me, I am not following Him; for, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." The darkness must be cleared away before I can follow Him. Hence, He washes our feet. By the washing of water through the word, He detaches us from the evil which causes the distance, and attaches us to Himself; placing us in that cloudless intimacy

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which belongs to us, as united by the Spirit to Him, and living by Him. Our position is defined in His words when closing His earthly ministry; (John xiv. 20,) "At that day [that is now] ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you;" the intimacy must be assured, or the following must be imperfect. Hence He washes by the word; and the "Mary," the earnest soul, waits on Him, until by His word it is (as washing expresses), separated in moral power from the defiling influences here, and made to realize what it is to be in Him, apart from all that which is contrary to Him. Until this is known, there can be no true guidance or power to follow Him, and if we would serve Him, we *must* follow Him.

We see in Paul's history, that though his first question and instinct of soul was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" that it was not told him for some days afterwards. It was only when Ananias came to him that this question was answered; and the proof that the Lord was before him, and He only

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before him, is that he “confers not with flesh and blood.” When Peter after the Lord’s resurrection went a fishing he was not following Him. He lacked that waiting on the Lord, that exercise of soul in His presence, which would at one and the same time have detached him from mere human ideas, and have led him into that nearness with the Lord, which *must* have resulted in following Him. “After they had dined,” the Lord talks to Peter, exercises his soul as to his own feelings about Himself. The question of exercise was, “Lovest thou me?” But what was the object of it? Peter (we read) was grieved because Jesus said unto him the third time, “Lovest thou me?” and he said, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” *That* was the exercise. But now we come to the Lord’s great *object* in thus exercising him. “Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” Peter had been a fishing because he was not following his Lord. It was not that he had not been forgiven for his denial of Him.

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He had not only been forgiven, but also ordained to go forth as His servant here. (John xx.) But there was not a soul-nearness in which Peter could be assured of his Master's mind and ways. Therefore the Lord's object is to produce this in His servant, and His word now to him is, "*Follow me.*"

It is in company with the mind and ways of Christ that the Spirit always is, and moves, and is known; and I believe the reason why many who are zealously working for Christ, and yet not in fellowship with the Holy Ghost, is simply this, that they are not in soul-nearness to Christ; they are not *following*; for if they were, they would be *where He is*. In plain words, there is need of patient waiting on Him; soul exercise as to the holy intimacy in which He sets us; knowing that it is by the ministry of His word that we are separated from everything which distances us from Him, or clouds our intimacy with Him. Through the action of His word on our souls, there will be no moral distance between us, and

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then the simple, easy, and necessary action of our hearts, as resulting from it, is to follow Him, and as we follow Him, we are sensibly *in Him*. This then evidently is the first thing that any one has to do in this day; and failure here, must entail failure all through. Alas! the more we observe souls, the more apparent it is that many think more of what they are able to do—what *they* deem fit and useful—than of what will please their Lord; and the result is, that there is no growth in the knowledge of His mind. They are practically ignorant of it on the most essential points, and however successful in their labours for others to some extent, they never seem to attain to the place of the “friends” of Christ, which they who follow Him are surely set in, and abundantly enriched.

O Lord, teach us to follow thee, for thine own name sake !

Truth itself cannot preserve; though it be the line in which one **is** preserved by the Spirit of God.

THE KINGDOM AND GLORY.

(Psalms viii., lxxii., cxxxii.)

THESE Psalms treat of the millennial kingdom and glory of the Lord Jesus—the Son of man—yet there is a difference in the character of each psalm, a peculiarity which may denote the wide range of glory, the power of Him, Centre of all God's ways, who will administrate that government, the blessings to the saints flowing from Him who is the only source and spring of all that varied scene. To us there is the revealed knowledge of a still wider display of glory. We know that our Lord Jesus will fill heaven as well as the earth; that He will have the Church of the first-born and other redeemed people in heavenly light and glory with Himself. And what a prospect opens to our faith, that such poor things should, as vessels of His grace and Spirit, witness all the vast range of glory which the Son of God, the Son of man, will administrate. The Holy Ghost's service and delight is, to heap crown upon crown on His head.

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In Psalm viii. "all things are put under his feet." It is universal dominion, including the creature who will be delivered (as in Rom. viii. 21) "into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

"O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." While the Holy Ghost uses this scripture in 1 Corinthians xv. as to His resurrection, in Hebrews ii. it is applied to the coronation of the Lord and points to Him now as "not having yet all things put under Him." Now after being a little lower than the angels on account of the suffering of death, He is crowned with glory and honour, above the heavens. And in what fine keeping with the subject is that word, "that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." (Ver. 2.) Satan will be put down. It is a central truth in Scripture that Satan always* is actively opposing the Lord, the Second Man—always against those

* See the solemn truth as to this in Job i., ii., Zechariah iii., in the gospels of Mark and Luke.

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who are His. The accuser of the brethren.

But Satan went too far when he conspired by wicked men against the Prince of Life. He was permitted to bruise the heel of the woman's seed, but the Lord will bruise his head. Thus universal power and judgment and rule is seen in this psalm.

Psalm lxxii. is different in character: the description of a reign of peace, "bringing peace to the people," is wonderfully beautiful. It is the reign of the King's Son. Solomon's reign. The Lord will first appear as David, the warrior king. He will clear the scene, purging the earth by judgment; every foe set as the footstool of His feet; then enter on peace, as here so sweetly revealed. Although the King's Son, "all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve him," "and he shall live, with an enduring name." (Ver. 17.) Men so appreciating His presence, clearly indicating the blessings of His rule, that they desire the continuance of it, as long as the sun: and

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“men shall be blessed in him.” I would just allude to Psalm cxxxii. in this place, rather differing again in its character yet beautifully expressive. (See ver. 13—17.) He satisfies the poor with bread, abundantly blessing her provision in that Zion which He hath chosen. “This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it.”

The priests clothed with salvation, and saints shouting aloud for joy; the joyful homage of the heart drawn out by Him who knows how to attract, how to fill, how to bless. The saints could have done nothing else than shout aloud.

Reverting to the concluding verses of Psalm lxxii. 18: “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.

“And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.” (Ver. 19)

“The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” (Ver. 20.)

Might not the last verse be omitted?

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Would the psalm be complete without it? Surely every word in Scripture has its own weight and value, and here it would appear as if David's soul was so filled with that scene of glory and the glorious Lord God, that he finds all complete and ended, every desire and need met, a fulfilment leaving nothing to be asked for: in this sense, prayer ended; and this could give a beauty to the verse. But does not faith still find a blessing of this character? When in communion with the Lord Jesus, the source of our life—He is our life—is there not the sense of the presence of One who can satisfy every desire and meet every need? “But of his fulness have we all received and grace *upon* grace.” How far do we know and prove this in our souls? Alas, how many have to say, My leanness! There must be the judgment of nature and flesh. The sentence of death on ourselves. There can be no solid Christianity without that truth, it may be but in measure realized. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of

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Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." There is a generation of saints now who have been favoured with great light. Dispensational knowledge abounds, and *the true peace of the sanctuary* is known by simple faith in the word of God. But the moral power of truth is wanted; the understanding of what our real life is, so that we should live that life, which is Christ; and with this *the condition of soul under which alone* our God can communicate divine realities—the depths of God. (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.) The power is always Christ by His Spirit, the condition under which alone He can impart it; the preparedness of heart He also must give. It is in this state, the broken heart in dependence and obedience, the soul will find the attractiveness of His person; the conscious taste of His love and sympathy, that love in its constraining power which is the spring of true devotedness. Will He give that to an unprepared heart unready for it? He cannot deny Himself surely; but His wisdom and faithfulness

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are as sure as His unfathomable love.
Oh, having the sentence of death in
ourselves, to be occupied with Himself!
Amen and Amen.

*“Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing;
Outstretch'd His wide dominion
O'er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion,
Or dove's light wing, can soar.*

*“For Him shall praise unceasing,
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing—
A kingdom without end.
The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove;
His name shall stand for ever,
His great best name of Love.”*

My heart is to be like the gold in which a peerless jewel is set; Christ dwelling in my heart. The setting should hold the jewel firmly. I should like saints to have a little more wonder about God and Christ. If God brings His own eternal power to bear on your little hearts, the best expression of your worship may be silence.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

PART II.

IN a former paper we have considered what the new man is, its order and life in Christ Jesus. Now we will meditate a little on how the old man is to be viewed and treated by Christians. We read, Ephesians iv. 24, "Ye have put off the old man, and have put on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This is God's view of the Christian; and in Colossians iii. 9, 10 we get how the Spirit of God is maintaining us according to God's view and purpose: "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who hath created him." The question of all importance is, how God views the old man, how He regards it; whether He is making any demand on it or not. If God is making demand on me as a child of the first Adam; and I am not able to meet it, but, on the contrary, find in myself a nature resisting and op-

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posing His will and pleasure, I must be unhappy and unsatisfactory to God and to myself. It is of the utmost importance to be clear on this point. Is God making demand on me as a man or not? I reply, No; no demand *whatsoever*. "Then (some may retort), if that be so, man may do what he likes; where is the moral state of a Christian then? But such a retort, however *natural*, indicates an inaccurate apprehension of *how* God has ceased to make a demand on man. Every man, whether under law or no law (Rom. ii.), has a sense of a demand on him from God. And the more he comes to understand God, the more this sense of demand must increase, as with Israel under law, and hence, as his intelligence increases, the more miserable he must be because he is not able to answer the holy and right demands of God. So that one whose conscience is truly awakened, finds that there is a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. It

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is then the cry comes forth, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now it is the practical answering of this question which determines the walk and power of a Christian in this scene. We have seen that the new man is in Christ Jesus; that it is of Him and in His life; we have now to learn from Scripture how the old man is regarded in the sight of God, and having learned this, we shall see how we ought to regard it and to treat it.

God deals with me, a believer in Christ, on the ground that my old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed. If the old man was not dealt with judicially in the cross of Christ, how could God righteously set me free from it, and create me anew in Christ Jesus? It is because of this judgment on it, that God can come forth and deal with me, not as a sinner, which would be judgment; but in grace, because Christ has risen from the dead. "Ye are also become dead to the law by the body of

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Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." Thus, it is plainly and fully set forth in Scripture, that God does not now demand from the old man, because He has judged it in the cross of Christ; and on the ground of this judgment, He can deal in grace with every one turning to Him. If man exists as man before God, God must make a demand on him. If God requires of man, He must require something to meet Himself; but in every trial He has made of man, it has been clearly proved that there is nothing in man that can meet Him; nay, that the nearer God comes to man, the more is his inability to meet God exposed.

The truth is that God *has* judged the flesh in the cross of Christ, and hence He can deal with me now according to His own mind and nature. If God had not judged and terminated the first man in the cross of Christ, He must still deal with it, and if He deals with it, it must either be able to meet Him in righteousness, as He demands, or I must be judged and lost. But God through

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the Son of His love *has* judged the old man in the cross, and now by and in Christ risen, He forms a new man. He does not recognize the old man, nor does He claim responsibility from it. He offers man salvation now through His Son. He makes no claim on him in his old nature, but He offers him in grace eternal life. Having judged the first man in the *death* of His Son, He can now satisfy His heart by receiving the prodigal on entirely new ground—in the nature and life of that Son as risen from the dead. It is impossible for the old man and the new to be mixed together. Any one who can form any idea of the greatness and glory of the Second Man could never suppose that there could be any intermixture between two existences so widely and essentially different; and unless we see the ground on which God receives the prodigal, in an inconceivably higher position and nature than he ever occupied, and that God is *just* in doing so, we can have no rest or assured peace in venturing to expect, much less to occupy, this high position.

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God, then, regards and deals with me as of the first Adam, as if I were dead. All His treatment of me is simply and entirely on this principle. Blessed be His name, He is warranted so to deal with me, and all His discipline and dealing is simply to reduce me *practically* to this condition in which He, through His mercy, is able to regard me; and because of which He is just to justify me as believing in His Son, and to reconstruct me anew of Him and by Him. I arrive then at the simple truth that God looks at me in the flesh as *dead*; and as such He demands nothing of me. I have no recognizable existence as a man before Him. He has set me in Christ, and unto His blessed image I am now being conformed, while in the resurrection I shall fully bear the image of the heavenly. It is plain and distinct that God neither expects nor exacts from the first man, He counts it dead; and when He deals with it, it is simply to reduce it *practically* to that condition in which alone He views it—*even death*. If God had not warrant to

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regard the first man as dead, He could not deal according to His heart with the prodigal, or establish him in position and life greater than he ever had before. How could He ignore the existence of a responsible creature unless He had executed judgment on him? But He has judged man in the cross of His Son, and every one who will accept His Son in faith God deals with on the ground of a new existence; his existence as a man in the flesh being judged in the cross, and therefore God is *just* in placing him in that position and life which pleases His own heart, and satisfies His nature.

But here I shall be met by an anxious question, viz., "How can I manage the old man? You say that God does not demand of it, that He counts it dead, but I feel that it is *not dead*. Can He allow me to go on sinning and living in the flesh while sheltering myself under the doctrine that He regards me as dead in the cross of Christ?" Now this is a right feeling; but the first thing necessary, in view of solving this question,

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is accurately to accept in faith the great truth which we have been dwelling on: that God does not recognize the existence of the first Adam as that which He expects or claims from; for the moment I truly accept this as His mind, I am bound to sustain the *conditions of it*, and walk here in the *non-recognition of myself*. And this is the real difficulty to nature. Man does not like to be unrecognized. He would rather be recognized by the exaction of a law by which he should be condemned if he did not keep it, than not be recognized at all. God exonerates me from claim because He regards me as dead in the cross of Christ; and if I by faith accept this, it is plain that if I do anything in the will of the flesh, and not by His rule and order, I am dishonest; I am practically ignoring that which I profess to accept; for, while accepting the fact that I am dead, in order to be exonerated from claim by God, I evade and depart from the very ground of my exemption toward God when I want to please myself. I, by acting in the will

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of the flesh, suffer that to revive and to be acknowledged in existence which I had accepted before God as dead in His sight, in order to be free from a claim from Him which it could not meet. And this, to say the least, is senseless and dishonest. How then shall I be able to walk according to God's mind about me? and as He counts me dead, how may I honestly be before Him in my walk here as dead? This is an important question for the godly soul, but I must postpone the subject to another occasion.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE END OF LIGHT.

WHEN the light of God breaks in on us, the first impression is that of wonder and delight; and this impression is so new and exhilarating that the tendency often is to be engaged with it, rather than with the use of it. Nothing is more palpable and painful than the fact

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that in all ages, light broke in on many who were either satisfied with the dawn of it or with using it very partially; and thus they did not reach to the end of light, the end of light is only reached by using it, and if I am satisfied with the fact of the entrance of it, or of having used it in some measure, I have failed to discover the end of it. It is thus we can account for all the imperfect movements in the Church of God since its decline. Every reformation, every separation, was suggested and executed by light at the first, and the effect seemed so satisfactory, that souls were buoyed up with the idea that they had reached the end of light. The end of light is to separate from all evil, and to place us "in the light as He is in the light." We then have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. The end of light is never reached until this point is reached, for this is the point to which light leads, and all its exertion is thitherward.

When light first dawns on a soul, it

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is felt to be to it as real a spiritual power as the light of the sun is real and powerful to the natural eye. The soul first awakes to it, and then begins to use it, and it is in the use of it that it finds out the end and value of it. If I am in a deep dark dungeon, long enveloped in darkness, and a light strikes in on me, and discloses a way of escape from it, I am immeasurably entranced with the light; but when I begin to use it, one stage of the journey is not enough. I must follow it; and follow it until I reach where it is *supreme*; where there is no darkness at all. It is not enough that I know that it has begun to work, or that it has helped me to take one step. No; I must follow it onward until I am "in the light as He is in the light;" for after all, that is my only true place, and the place in which I am now recognized by God, for I am now "light in the Lord." (Eph. v. 8.) The danger is that I become satisfied with this new favour because it has reached me and has acted to a certain point; and this is the cause why so

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many who have received light never advance to maturity. Like an oak planted in a flower-pot, such will never grow to their true proportions, for they satisfy themselves with the fact, that light has reached them, and not with its value and use. Light is too often regarded as of individual existence, as if it were a lamp within me, rather than as reaching me from Him who is the Light. Christ is the Light, and the action of it is to lead me to Himself; to place me in the light as He is in the light. This is the end to which it reaches, and towards which all its activity tends, for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all;" and if I do not reach to it, there is not singleness of eye. (Luke xi. 34—36.) There is some part dark, there is a seeking something besides Christ. The whole body is not luminous, as when a candle in its blaze doth give light; and the end of light is lost to the soul. The light has dawned and that is deemed sufficient; and just so much of it is accepted as suits us, and enables us to go on with our

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fellows on earth, and not what suits God and us as His heavenly people. But to *suit* God is what we are called to now; and to reach this we must be “in the light as *He is in the light*,” and in no mere measure of it. And not only so; but it is there only that we can *truly* suit our christian fellows; for there only can we “have fellowship” with them; and our separation is of no low earthly character; but of a divine one.

“THOU ART WITH ME.”

Psalm xxiii. 4.

IF I enter the dark valley with Christ, I know that *it is* dark; but as I walk with Him through it, His word is in me. I see things as they are, that is light; and therefore I see no death. I am free from all around me as to myself; but He conducts me *through* the valley, shewing me that I am both free, and that there is no death for me to see. It

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is not in the valley that I am occupied with *glory*, that is on the hill-side; but if His word be in me, and Himself present with me, I am walking through the valley *in light*; for He is the Light, and the light frays away the darkness. Mary (John xi.) walks through the valley with the Lord, but she walks through it in light. Before she joined Him she was in darkness, but the moment He is with her she sees things as they are, and walks out of them with Him, as conscious of being apart from them; for *that* is the power of light.

It is on the hill-side that glory reaches me; there I am in spirit in glory, *not in the valley*, I should say; but I do not wait for light till I get to the hill, if Christ be with me in the valley.

God's gracious way is to get a man taught in the sanctuary, that he may *not* get fiery trial down here.

LIGHT IN A DAY OF DIFFICULTY.

PART V.

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

IF I am following the Lord, I am *where He is*, which is the result of following Him; and there necessarily I arrive at what His mind is at the present time. I am “in the light as He is in the light;” “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Knowledge of the meaning of Scripture in itself is not communion. Communion is having common mind with the Lord at any given moment, and for this we must be in the light as He is in the light. Now communion with the Lord, being the property of eternal life is our only true state; we have the mind of Christ. Surely nothing can be plainer than that it is the Lord’s desire that His servants should be in this nearness to Him; and unless they are they cannot know how to order themselves in a world and a scene where everything is darkness and opposed to Him; and

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where among His own professed people, there are all shades of opinion, and every variety of practice founded there-upon. The very intent of the Lord's ministry, as I have endeavoured to shew in a former paper, is to lead us into this nearness. He washes my feet, in order that I may be separated by His word from the influences around me, which distance me from Him, and that I may, like Mary, sit at His feet and learn His mind. . Do we need to be *urged* to take this place? Can anything be more grateful to the heart that has tasted of the love of Christ than to be told that He desires to impart to us His mind; and that, not in a general way, but His mind, as it is at the *present moment*; for this is communion. Nay, that the Scriptures were written in order to disclose to us His mind at certain eras, as well as the general principles which govern it always. But then, as I have said, the *knowledge* of His mind as declared in Scripture is not enough in itself. I require to be in communion with the Lord in order to *apply* the

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Scripture ; for there only I am in the light as He is in the light. For instance, I may be able to see in various scriptures, how Solomon was a type of Christ in His Messianic kingdom ; but if, because I find Christ in the type, I bring Christians into it, it is evident that I am not in communion with my Lord's mind as to it, because such scriptures refer to Him in His relation to His earthly people, and not to His heavenly. There is nothing so blessed as to be in the mind of the Lord as it is at the present time ; and yet alas ! saints are too indifferent about it. In a great measure this indifference arises from the consciousness that one knows so little of it. If it were better known it would be more valued. Now the real hindrance or check is that it cannot be known but as it is entered into by faith. There is nothing in the circumstances around us which can give us any clue to our Lord's mind ; nay, on the contrary, the observance of circumstances, and seeking to obtain guidance or help from them is sure to deceive us and lead us astray,

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for they are darkness and not light. The circumstances and state of things here may drive us to the Lord; and then before Him, we see how opposite what men approve of and advocate is to the principles of His mind. But again it is undeniable that the principles of His mind which the scriptures only unfold, do not obtain their true weight and force but as I am in His presence. There, through faith, I am assured of their nature and force, and of their distinct opposition to man's ways and thoughts. Let us suppose a disciple of Christ led by grace to follow Him; his feet washed, and his soul tasting of the holiness of being separated in spirit by the power of the word unto Christ in the light, and this for the first time. Will he not in his walk, according to the sense of what he has enjoyed with the Lord, refuse and turn away from things and people here which bear no sympathy or fellowship with the mind of Christ in which he has had fellowship? He may have had but little communion, but he turns the

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grace conferred on him to good account, and hence more will be given him. He begins right; he begins above; he begins in communion with Christ, and as far as his light and strength in grace go, he refuses everything which is not consistent with this communion. The scene ("the light") where this communion can alone be known, *demand*s it of him. If he says he has communion and walks in darkness, he lies, and does not the truth. Hence communion is the test of every action, for it is only maintained by walking in the light as He is in the light. If we give up walking in the light—in the holiness of God, we lose both the place and the privilege of communion; and we are not qualified to determine our course in a world of evil.

Now, the general way with saints is to see how much can be retained without outrage to their consciences, rather than that of a true disciple as I have supposed, entering first into the Lord's mind, and by it, according as he was assured of it, and as scripture *authorized* him, refusing and turning aside from

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everything unsuited to Him. When in communion with the Lord, I am under the consciousness of what suits Him; His word through faith supports me therein; and in the midst of the disorder around me, I seek to serve and honour Him. How different is the result of each! In the one case I accept things simply as they are holy and suited to Him, for which the word is my authority; in the other, I have no just apprehension of what suits Him, but I am craving His acknowledgment of me in the things in which I find myself. In the latter I am like Abraham, with a good inclination, no doubt, but outside faith, saying, "O that Ishmael might live before thee;" while in the former I am like Moses, demanding the extirpation and removal of everything inconsistent with the divine presence. (Exodus xxxii. 20—27.) In the one case I seek for the maintenance of unmixed good, which I myself have tasted and enjoyed in the Lord's presence, and which I know from His word that He will support me in. In the other, I seek

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only His acceptance of things as they are, and have no true idea of anything superior, which in its application might set all aside, and certainly would spare nothing which was not consistent with His holiness. It is not the divine *thing* I seek, but the divine *sanction* of the best thing here that I may find or know. I may seek improvement in correcting things that are; but they are *human* things still, however corrected. But what is divine needs not improvement, it supersedes what is human and existing.

The first and the great thing which one following Christ, and consequently in communion with Him will insist on, is holiness to the Lord—separation from every kind of known unholiness. What else could be the feeling and purpose of one who is in the light as He is in the light? We are the habitation of God through the Spirit. And the more I am in communion, the more shall I accept this word, and in faith maintain it, because in communion my soul is certified that it is “*of Him.*” In all times

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the true saint ever maintained separation from evil as the great characteristic of his calling ; and the more fully God was revealed, the more cogently and distinctly was this principle maintained and insisted on. When God dwells among His people, as He does on the ground of redemption, after they had come out of Egypt, the one great leading principle is, " Be ye holy, for I am holy ;" and there never was any true-hearted expression of devotedness to God, that was not characterized by this principle. Be it a Daniel in Babylon, an Ezra or a Nehemiah with the returned captives in Jerusalem : " holiness to the Lord " was the governing principle. And there never was any power, whether in a Phinehas or a Gideon, but it was on this principle from the outset, refusing the evil, separating from it in the sternest manner. Surely this is most consistent. God is light, and the more I am with Him, and know myself to be His habitation here, the more simply and distinctly must I be as He is. He must determine my ways and

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nothing else; and I simply and eagerly maintain that "holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever." It is the leading principle of the disciple who has been near His Lord and in communion with Him. Holiness in everything he must insist on: there can be no excuse for aught of known unholiness: he cannot, he must not, be mixed up with it. He has been in the presence where no unholiness can enter: his tastes and habits have been formed *there*; and the natural consequence is separation from all known evil. He accepts nothing, however plausible, he has no other ground but that of holiness to the Lord. And hence, when things in the church had reached an unconstitutional state of evil, the word of God to Timothy is, "If a man purge himself from these [the vessels to dishonour], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use." No one who does not purge himself can be so. Nothing can be more distinctly or fully declared in scripture than that the first principle of God's habitation is holiness. God is

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holy, and the soul in communion with Him knows and rejoices in His holiness, and could not in any wise submit to anything here as for Him, connected with unholiness. In communion I learn the true strength and value of His word, and then, as I maintain it, as I walk in faith, I am assured and upheld by Him in that line and course which only suits Himself. My heart before Him approves of, enjoys, no other line, and in this line I am truly a witness of Him, however spoiled, and marred, and gone are all the external beauties and ornaments of His habitation.

Joshua and Caleb had to go round. If I see one going wrong whom God has not given up, neither must I. If Christ wash his feet, so must I. My greater vigour must come out in being where God and Christ are. The one who is right ought to have power to let the water into the lock, as it were, and raise the assembly to the right level. You must not ignore the state of the assembly, or you will do the right thing in a wrong way.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”—
John xiv. 6.

THE context puts a limitation upon the sense in which the terms “the way, the truth, and the life” are used here by the blessed Lord about Himself: He is “the way” in other senses too; God’s way of revealing Himself in creating, upholding, redeeming; man’s way to God, the way too to walk in; He is the truth, the One in and by whom the real truth as to God, Satan, the world, man, alone is known: and He is the life, eternal life, life incorruptible, blessed be God, our life is He. But strictly speaking here, verses 4, 5, 7, limit the bearing of the subject matter to the Father. “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto *the Father* but by me.” Yet, as in all the senses in which He who is the great divine medium is the way, the truth, and the life; He Himself still is a person to be known

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and studied, besides being *what* He is; so here also. If He is the way, the truth, and the life relatively to our coming to the Father, if that is what is presented to us here; still He Himself who is all this, He Himself *is*; and greatly do we deceive ourselves if we learn not Himself while we study the doings and offices and glories which He presents to us that we may learn Himself in them. Yet so senseless is man's mind that it will get so absorbed in offices and benefits to *us* through them, as to forget to learn Him who fills the offices, who gives the benefits. Moreover, while He is the way, the truth, and the life; and while this, the way, the truth, and the life centralize in Him, they are different excellencies, and separable, in thought at least, the one from the other. A man may have life in Christ and be a son of God and yet know little about the way or the truth. One may know Him as the way and not know the Father in Him. He as the life leads us by the knowledge of the truth in the way; but still, after all,

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there is Himself who is all this, who does all this for us. And when we speak of coming to the Father, we speak of that which differs from coming to a place, as even to the Father's house. When we come to know Him, we find how straitened we are in our own selves, how little able to take in—and there is no way of learning our littleness like it. See this, for instance, in 1 John i. 2, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." John is writing to believers and he is presenting that which, concerning the word of life, had not shined out, and shined into John, until the Lord had taken the last Adam position. Now the life was manifested, and it had communicated of itself, in its own present character of display; so that they

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that know it have fellowship together; a fellowship which is characterized by their perception of the Father's thoughts about the Son, and of the Son's thoughts about the Father. Here they have complete fellowship. This too may be seen, in another connection perhaps, but seen in Ephesians iii. 14—21, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . according to the riches of his glory, strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, so that, rooted and grounded in love, *we may be able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.* Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." The great lesson is Himself. And who and what, I pray you, is He in whom such infinite and

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eternal glory is found; by whom we are brought into such fellowship, such communion through the Spirit? He that is God, and the Father's centre and end and object in heaven and eternity. They made to become *our* centre and object in time and on earth. The three onenesses in John xvii. give another illustration. Now, in sorrowful contrast to this, I see some learning about Him as *a way* for themselves to God: blessed if they find in that way the end of self, or a bit of the way that will lead them from self to God; but how short of blessing is it if they selfishly say, "safe, because in the way; learn not Him, but go on with the things of self."

Just so men speak of Him as "the truth," and so He is; but the truth as to what and to whom? Surely we know little of Him as the truth, if that truth has not taught us about our selfishness and the contrast between His willessness and our wilfulness; our selfishness and His unselfishness; about the true character of the world in which He was murdered, and in which the religion of

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flesh would allow us to settle down. He too is the One who can give incorruptible, eternal life, and it is a blessed thing for one who has not received it to know that He is the only giver of it. But He is our life. Our life is hid with Him in God. If I know these things as having learnt them in Him, am I finding more than that in Him? Himself is more than any one of His gifts, though they all tell of Him. But, as I said, the context here gives a limitation: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto *the Father* but by me." But if through the life I have known the truth, and walked in Him, and come to the Father, is that all? or does He Himself (who has been my power, and light, and way) still remain in all the eternal, divine excellency of what He is—God manifest in the flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, the eternal lover of my soul?

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

PART III.

WE have considered that a Christian is a new man in Christ Jesus, of another order and existence from the first man. We have also seen that God counts the first man dead in the cross of Christ, the old man being crucified with Christ; that He makes no claim on it, and only deals with it to reduce it practically to that condition in which He is able to regard it through the death of His Son. The point for us now to examine is, How can we maintain ourselves in the condition in which God in His grace sees us? In a word, how should we be so dead as not to serve sin? It is plain that such is our calling. If God counts me dead and therefore does not exact from me, but in grace by His Spirit forms me anew in Christ Jesus, it is plain, if I know and accept the grace, that I do violence to it and to my conscience if I accept it in order to be freed from claim from God which I could not meet, and yet refuse it when pleasing

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self is concerned. I could not truly accept the benefit of being counted dead before God when I desire to be free from His claim, and on the other hand deny the fact when I desire to please myself! I am counted dead by God, if I accept the relief which this confers. I cannot forego it and retain the relief; and if I accept it, I must ever and in every place maintain the truth that I am dead, or I must forego the relief consequent on being counted so. 'Yes truly (replies the earnest soul), but how shall I keep myself in the state in which God counts me, and where I have such unspeakable relief? I do not want to be dead before God, and alive before man. I want to be dead always. I desire that my body should be under the entire control and will of my Lord; but how is this to be attained?'

In Rom. xii. the apostle says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this

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world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may be able to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Here two things are especially enjoined: the one, to present our bodies a living sacrifice; and the other, to be transformed from the world or age. The first we are to accept through grace as our true place, presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice; and the mode by which we are transformed is not by renouncing this thing or that. Human reformation never can go farther than to renounce certain things which are judged to be evil. It cannot (for it has no *new* element or principle) introduce what would at once remove and detach the possessor from the whole system, and not merely from the irregularities of the system—the vile and refuse. This new element God gives, even the renewing of the mind, which means simply a new mind. The word, either as a verb or noun, is only used four times in the New Testament. Here it is used as a noun, and in Titus iii. 3, "renewing of the Holy Ghost."

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In 2 Corinthians iv. 16, "the inward man is renewed day by day;" and in Colossians iii. 10, "which is renewed in knowledge," &c., it is a verb. This is entirely a new element and power, and it is by this, the renewing of the mind, that I am transformed from this world or age. I am entirely changed from all that which surrounds me, addresses me, and acts on my flesh. It is not merely that I see the corruption of it; and being partaker of the divine nature, have escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust; but I am not *of* the age. A man's mind is his kingdom. I have got a new mind, the mind of Christ, the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And it is by this, and in the power of it, that I am to be transformed from this age. With this mind I am taken up, and am transformed to it; and prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Our mistake is, that we occupy ourselves with that *from* which we are to be transformed in seeking to renounce this and that in it; and to reform ourselves, in-

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stead of judging ourselves because we are not walking in the Spirit; for if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It is a most anxious and serious question with the true-hearted: How shall I keep clear of the flesh and of the world? The answer is simple: "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." This states the true result of our walking in the Spirit, and it resolves itself simply into this: If you are pre-occupied with the higher and better thing, you will not fall into the lower. But then you *must* be pre-occupied with it. "Be not conformed, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." And hence, as it is written, Colossians iii., "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. . . . For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. *Mortify therefore*

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your members that are on the earth." Occupation with "things above;" the great realities there with Christ who is our life, so empowers and invigorates me that I am able to mortify my members on the earth which I have counted dead according to God's grace in that I am risen with Christ. It is because of my occupation through the Spirit with Christ risen, and knowing Him as my life, that I am able to mortify my members on earth and to realize that I have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. *Occupation* with the higher—the new life and condition given to us—is the only true way to preserve us from the lower and carnal. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; and so, according to the extent of our engagement with the higher, is our deliverance from the lower. When we find or suffer from an evil working in our nature, our tendency is to see how we should correct or improve it; rightly feeling in conscience that it should not

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be in activity. We devote our attention rather to the suppression of the wrong, than the cultivation of the right. It arises from a desire to see ourselves satisfactory to our own consciences. Now it is quite right and necessary that the conscience should be satisfied, and that it should take account of every wrong and evil; and the more so as we are in the presence of God (as we hope to consider in another paper); but the point now before us is, How can I rise above my old man and walk here apart from its will and principle, as a dead man, as God in His grace counts me in the cross of Christ? This is plainly set forth in Scripture to be in proportion as we are pre-occupied with Christ and the scene *in which He is*. We have seen from Colossians iii., that if we are risen with Him, and seek the "things above where Christ sitteth," we are able, qualified, and empowered, by the Spirit, to mortify our members on earth; the superior engagement makes us capable and bound to renounce that which in mind and action is op-

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posed to God. But not only this. From 2 Corinthians iii. 18 we learn that beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord, which leads us there. By association with Christ, the blessing we get from waiting on Him, and reading His word, our new nature gets enlarged and strengthened, and capable of turning away from the perishing vain things down here. Hence the apostle can say, "I carry about in my body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in my body." The one most engaged in waiting on the Lord; learning His mind from the word; contemplating His counsels, becomes delivered in a way he could not expect from the influences and activities of his flesh: whereas if he were to spend his time trying to bring the flesh into order, he would find that when he expected he had best succeeded, all must be begun over again. True the body should be kept in subjection, but in no way is it better kept thus, than in studying, not

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its pleasure or its perfection, but the pleasure and mind of *Christ*, which is always happy and strengthening for the new man. Every saint will practically find, to the joy of his heart and the rest of his conscience, that if he walks in the Spirit he will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. In a word, that as he is pre-occupied with Christ, in whom his life is hid, he rises superior to the will and working of the flesh; for in the Spirit he mortifies the deeds of the body.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE INTRUSION OF THE FLESH.

ONE of the great snares of this day is the delusion that the flesh can be brought into the sanctuary, and it is sad and fearful how this occurs in various ways, and never without serious loss, and seasons of darkness or exposure to the Christian. All the trouble in the assembly at Corinth was caused by the allowance of the flesh. They were carnal and walked as men.

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It is therefore of the utmost importance that we clearly understand that the habitation of God is only through the Spirit, and that the Spirit never coalesces with the flesh. On the contrary, it lusteth against the flesh. It is in relentless opposition to it. The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. This truth cuts at the root of every human feeling and desire, and is the one most opposed by man's mind. For the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, that we might not do the things that we desire. The first great thing for the saint to understand is, that in order to please God, and be free from the power of the flesh, he must be in the Spirit. It is not doing or engaging in right things or services or meetings which will preserve him from the flesh; the only way is by keeping in that which is the opponent of the flesh, even the Spirit. To walk about in the practical abnegation of my natural mind and feelings in religious

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things, is a terrible ordeal to man. The bitterest condemnation to the old man, and the one which he in every way seeks to evade is, that he must in no wise come into the sanctuary.

In Psalm lxxiii. I am taught the difference between a regenerate soul which looks out on the world from its own point of view, and one which is in the sanctuary with God. If I be the former, I regard and measure everything in relation to myself; if the latter, God is before me, and He is my standard. I see things as they are before Him. The Spirit keeps me there, and Christ is manifested to me. I am happy and blessed, not by seeing what I am, but by seeing and knowing Him. When the flesh intrudes and is allowed any place, it is ever with this result; that I am ruled by it, for the Spirit has ceased to rule. If I suffer it to intrude in any way, be it in singing or praying or preaching; I shall find before long, that what I have been occupied with, has fostered the flesh instead of subduing it. And this it is which accounts for

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the little strength which saints have for ordinary life after seasons which have been considered the most animated and refreshing. Now, the fact of possessing spiritual gifts does not preserve one from the intrusion of the flesh, as we see by the Epistle to the Corinthians. The heart of man is deceitful above all things. The flesh would have led Paul to be exalted above measure; because of his vision in the third heavens, where he in his flesh was not even acknowledged. It would have led him to boast of having been where he as a man was so completely ignored and passed over as a non-existence, that whether he was in the body or out of the body he could not tell. There is a solemnity and weight about one who is in the Spirit outside the flesh, which cannot be mistaken. There is a faith in Christ and a rest in God quite and entirely different from the satisfaction which thrills the natural mind by the force of language or the pathos of music. Like the sacred perfume of the sanctuary (Exodus xxx. 38), it is

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unique and not to be imitated; there is a liberty in the glory which the Spirit alone possesses. That we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit is the main principle of our present position and power. If I am in the Spirit, Christ is my object, and everything that I do is according to His mind; and therefore with edification to the saints, and growth to myself. If not, the door is open to the flesh; and there is no victory over it. When the flesh is allowed *any* entrance, there is a "dark part" in the body (see Luke xi. 35), and this dark part affects the whole body like a waster on a candle; the light is obstructed, and the body is not luminous: and moreover, if the flesh be even apparently sanctioned before God, there is an unquestionable warrant for giving it a place among men; whereas, if it be thoroughly and entirely refused any place before God, there can be no warrant for its position or acknowledgment before men. If allowed in a Christian it must be exposed: there will either be open failure or darkness of

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soul, for "he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."

THE POWER OF LIFE.

The foundation is Christ. It is not in the separate stones that the value of the temple consists; it is the temple as a whole and the foundation on which the whole temple stands is the righteousness of God, in which He raised Christ from the dead and quickened us together with Him. It is not merely that we have something outside, but we have that which is *in us*—the power of life. And this is most important as to walk. Sealed with the Spirit, I am one with Christ. There is a great amount of slovenly walk before God in the thought of *quietness*. True there should be quietness; but it must be the *quietness of life*. God has set us in a certain position, and then claims everything from us according to that position. It is not to be my mind working on God's truth, but God's truth working on my mind. We have an unction from the Holy One. There is a marvellous dif-

HOME.

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ference between grasping after truth, and finding truth itself holding us. One who has intercourse with a living Christ has the power of life, and there is no other way of "quitting ourselves like men" than by living out this life.

HOME.

Oh! bright and blessed scenes,
 Where sin shall never come,
 Whose sight my longing spirit weans
 From earth, where yet I roam!

And can I call my home
 My Father's house on high;
 The rest of God, my rest to come,
 My place of liberty?

Yes, in that light unstained,
 My stainless soul shall live;
 My heart's deep longings more than gained,
 When God His rest shall give.

His presence — there my soul,
 Its rest, its joy untold,
 Shall find, when endless ages roll,
 And time shall ne'er grow old.

My God the centre is,
 His presence fills that land;
 And countless myriads own'd as His,
 Round Him adoring stand.

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My God, whom I have known,
Well known in Jesus' love;
Rests in the blessing of His own,
Before Himself above.

Glory supreme is there,
Glory that shines through all,
More precious still that love to share,
As those that love did call.

Like Jesus in that place
Of light and love supreme,
Once man of sorrows full of grace,
Heaven's blest and endless theme.

Like Him, O grace supreme!
Like Him, before thy face,
Like Him, to know that glory beam,
Unhindered face to face.

O! love supreme and bright,
Good to the fullest heart,
That gives me now as heavenly light
What soon shall be my part.

Be not to me, my God,
As one that turned aside
To tarry for a night, and trod
His onward way. Abide

With me as light divine,
That brings into my breast
Those gladdening scenes e'en now as mine,
Soon my eternal rest.

THE NARROW PATH.

“First pure, then peaceable.”*

A MATTER of great moment is surely involved in the proposition which Dr. Pusey's “Eirenikon”* throws out for the consideration of the professing Church in these last times. Perhaps few specifics have been so bold, and certainly none more attractive, of all which have for ages been recommended to meet the divisions, so steadily accompanying the declension of the Church to its final apostasy, as Dr. Pusey's scheme for “a united Christendom.” The development and mastery of the human mind may have given birth to the neology of Germany, and more recently to the speculations of the “Essays and Reviews,” by which are called in question (if not positively denied) the authority of the Bible, and the authenticity of divine revelation. In addition to this scepticism, there is also the determination of human will, which breaking

* Peaceable is the English of εἰρηνική, from which eirenikon is derived.

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loose from all barriers, in order to make a way for itself, shoots a-head of its rival, and boldly trampling down all the claims of man and of God, gains the unenviable notoriety of bringing clay to "the image" for the formation of its ten toes, previous to its final overthrow and destruction! Mind and will, to say nothing just now of heart and conscience, have grown old in the rapid and successional developments, which have now brought to maturity, in this nineteenth century, the very last prophetic forms of their joint alienation from scripture, and their common apostasy from God and from Christ! Whatever this proposed Eirenikon may be worth for to-day, it is well to see what its constituent elements are; and certainly these stalk abroad in their gigantic growth in Christendom—united or disunited!

The proposed confederation of churches, eastern and western—or as some would say, the union of the Romish and Protestant Churches, whether established by tradition or law (upon some expla-

nations from the grandmother to her children, and upon some concessions from all the members of the family) may present the charm of a somewhat new basis, for fresh formations of an ecclesiastical system, but certainly lend not the shadow of a hope to those who mean to look at everything in the light of truth and of God. Indeed the man must be a bold one, who dares to augur any real change (even for the better) which begins with a compromise of conscience—*that* conscience is not to be envied, which has already learnt the dreadful secret of conceding to an “Eirenikon,” what is due to God, and which, if followed, would separate to himself, in a greater measure of truth—though far enough away from the truth itself, as regards Christ, or the Church of the living God.

There are, however, some men and celebrities too, who, though they accept things as they are, and would be content with the spread of what already exists, yet nevertheless, stoutly refuse this proposed association with Rome on the

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assumption that she is the Babylon of the Revelation, and that consequently to receive or fraternise with her, would be finally "to partake of her plagues," and become the next door neighbour to "the habitation of devils." These (and they are many) who thus attach Babylon to Rome, in the apocalyptic judgments, maintain their safety by retiring on the broad basis of a general Protestantism; whilst others again who discover the characteristics of Babylon in the looseness of mere Protestantism, retreat upon the more promising ground of Evangelicalism, and insist upon their security, with the great Luther at their head, by means of newly adopted standards and tests, which separate them from the Continental churches, whether eastern or western, into the National Establishment of our own country.

The tumultuous waves of the great sea which cannot be restrained, have given birth to the modern outbreakings of ritualistic observances in all directions and produced a stir and a strife in the very midst of this haven of security

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and rest, and these Evangelicals, who lay so snugly till now, find in their turn they have no option but to take the Church of England as by law established, with its litany and liturgy, or be Nonconformists. True, the clergy may stay in, and hold, yea, and preach purity of doctrine as gathered from the untainted source of the word of God. But this license is found, in those who accept it, to be mere looseness; and instead of bringing any liberty to the enlightened conscience, plunges it into deeper uneasiness and self-judgment upon the manifested guilt of voluntarily practising such an outrage upon truth and upon God. Those who demur to accepting the only open course to a troubled conscience, sinning against its own light, by obedience to that word, "Come out of her, my people," can only stay in and fight. But what do they fight against, and with whom? Persons more consistent with their oaths than themselves. The battle is accepted by both parties, and the conflict may be hot against their breth-

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ren, "the Ritualists;" but the selfsame Church will spread her covering wings for shelter and for succour over all the disputants; and if boldness and daring lead any to challenge the supposed innovators in ecclesiastical courts, the supreme judge will and must pronounce against the troubled, and marvel that they did not know their Church better.

Relief is in *release* from the trammels which fetter conscience, and is always within one's own reach. It is in the same good old-fashioned way of Moses "refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" that any in these days, discovering a State Church to be but an arm of flesh, can get out to God, in real identification with His people and with His own work. One step clears the distance, and all such difficulties are gone.

It is true that Nonconformity will offer itself as a resource to some who have not simple faith to take the step which brings into true liberty, and where a half-way house is wanted, this hydra-headed monster has many to choose

from; but to any soul rightly exercised upon the discovered state of Christendom as a whole, Dissent, with all its denominational nomenclature, will be no better than a modern Babel, only with a greater confusion of tongues and more prevailing uncertainty. How can this be a permanent resource to a spirit exercised upon no less a matter than the Church of Christ, when conscience and the heart are looking for guidance from God and His word by the Holy Ghost? In brief, refusing thus the very last and best of national establishments, and equally unable and unwilling to cast an eye upon the flickering forms of Dissent, many have been brought at this crisis and at such a moment to learn and own the truth of the ruin of the great outward professing Church; and instead of further accepting any expedients on the graduated scale which culminates in the Eirenikon of Oxford, to cling to the guidance of the prophetic word, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." How suited are the words of Christ at

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such a moment to the heart, troubled and affrighted at the widespread ruin and departure from God of all in the Church and in the world: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see." None but those who have followed such a word of counsel, can tell the relief it brings to the soul; and from this point onward it may truly be said, the heart and conscience are making one grand discovery of the suitability of the word of God for every emergency, as well as the sufficiency of the grace of Christ for all our weakness. Sooner or later, the very truth which was once compromised for the sake of union is now held in its priceless supremacy, and all other things are sacrificed to it. Union is no longer admitted to be strength, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." "Hath the Lord as great

delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" is now become the standard of judgment and rule of action. When such principles as these are discovered and accepted, things necessarily change their places and importance. *Separation* from evil, in a growing apostasy, is doubtless the foremost of these; and those who have adopted it know full well what it costs in practice, and what a revolution was made in the mind as it bowed to the instruction, that "in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour; if a man therefore *purge himself* from these he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Thousands in a disunited Christendom have, thank God, for many years stood upon this simple ground of separation unto God, and to the faithfulness of Christ's love, and the confession of the Holy Ghost's presence and sufficiency. The few who came out

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of all existing systems, and were found here and there, gathered to the Person of the risen and glorified Lord, and Head of His body, the Church, have been very conscious of the blessing which filled the vessels to the very brim, and with wine such as none but He, at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, could produce. In the richer and increasing enjoyment of such a ministration from the fulness of the Head to the members—who though they met as twos and threes, yet nevertheless met in the unity of the Spirit—no guarantee existed for its perpetuity, save as each and all were found “endeavouring to keep this unity in the bond of peace.” “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” In the double ruin of the professing church, and of this present dispensation too, many a heart leaped for joy as it found the threescore and ten palm trees, and the twelve wells of water as fresh

as ever; the witnesses of the unchanging goodness of God to any who would come out of every false refuge, and prove the sufficiency of Himself for an evil day. The Lord alone was the security of the people who were in such a place as this, exposed on every side to all the dangers which had corrupted and made Christendom what it is, and from which we had separated ourselves, and sought to become vessels of honour and meet for the Master's use. Pursued in our turn, and put to the proof, by the far more subtle wiles of the enemy upon the deepest matters of doctrine and of discipline, shall we be content to keep up an outward appearance of union at the expense of truth and of Christ? or shall we, passing under this ordeal, sacrifice the fairest show in the flesh to the claims of God and our allegiance to Him? Many amongst us wavered, and raised the old cry of union and peace; whilst others, in no way hindered in the pursuit of truth and holiness by what threatened us on every hand, separated once more from laxity and looseness,

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and found themselves with the few who accepted the exhortation, "buy the truth and sell it not." Moreover, as regarded *the position* to be maintained in these "closing-up" days, the lighted candle, and the bushel, and the bed, were accepted as warnings by all such; and as respected the *state and condition* morally, the salt and the dunghill were found to be a word in season and of unchanged value. If the original and manifested oneness of the Church were no more, and if the Pentecostal power of unity *in form* were also a thing of the past, still this word of encouragement remained, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I* in the midst of them;" and this became faith's warrant for the needed grace of to-day, and for the largest expectations of to-morrow. Put to the test again, as these have been, by recent occurrences, we could neither refuse the sieve nor the sifting, severe as this trial was; and we have to learn that hardest of all Church lessons—that if by concessions and compromise of what belongs

to God the common alliances and unions of the day may be easily reached, and the panacea of Eirenikon glimpsed in the future; so, on the other hand, in proportion to the faithful grasp of all that concerns Christ and the Church will be the steady retirement of the soul from popularity and its many thousands of devotees. Christianity, with the Spirit, must lead away from the corruption which makes Christendom what it is; and withdrawment from this is to find oneself, step by step, in the path where a Paul proved "all they in Asia are turned away from me;" or, better still, with Him who said, when all had forsaken Him, "Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." An *extreme* position should wear upon it a charm to the disciple's heart, for love and obedience to the Lord and Master must bring into it still; and more blessed will His company be because of the brokenness of spirit, which leads one to say in our little measure, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the

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enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

There is an extreme position in the heavens at this present time, and but One occupies it, save as we are with Him there in spirit, as quickened together, and raised, and seated—there was once an extreme position on the earth (what an opposite one!) and He who made it for Himself has left it for us, shall we be frightened as we approach it, however slowly—or when we see others, who once walked with the Lord, give up, and turn aside upon a broader path? Accommodate Christ sufficiently, to *any* existing state of things, and the selfsame day even Herod and Pilate may shake hands, and be made friends; but separate Christ off, upon His own confession of Himself before the high priest, and Caiaphas will rend his clothes, and deliver Him up the selfsame day to Pilate, to be crucified! What is this Eirenikon of to-morrow, but an accept-

ance of the Herod-Pilate-Caiaphas of yesterday? What is it morally, but the acceptance of a state of things which broke Paul's heart, when he said (like his Master who wept over Jerusalem) "whose end is destruction?" What is it ecclesiastically, but the open acceptance of Laodicea, in forgetfulness of the Son of man, in the midst of the seven candlesticks, out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and who says, "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth?" What is the lesson for to-day? "Come out of her, my people," as regards the mystic Babylon; outside the camp, to *Jesus*, if we speak of Christendom; "touch not the unclean thing," if we think of Corinthian agreements; purge himself from vessels of dishonour, if it be the great house. But is the lesson for to-day merely the rejection of evil? No—there is also what is *positive* for truth and for God, though this may seem to be exclusive—and must be in fact, something more, since it can only be reached and maintained by association

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with Jesus our Lord, the only example of a true heart and of a devoted life; which led Him by obedience into an extreme place, when shining as the light of the world, and put Him into an extreme position now that our life is hid with Christ in God! In the world before the flood, an "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him;" and surely this is the place of the Church itself in figure, or of any now in fact—for what is any real testimony in these days, but to walk through the world like Christ, and then to step into the heavens with Him—He was a man of extremes as to truth and holiness—though in grace He was found eating and drinking with publicans and sinners—what extremes, and yet how perfect in all! The Lord grant us "the mind of Christ" opening itself out to the lost and the undone, and closing itself up against all that is not of the Father, but is of the world and the wicked one! Who was ever so large-hearted as Christ? and yet who is it tells us of the strait gate, and the narrow path, but He who made it for Himself and trod it?

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IS EVERY ONE A PREACHER?

THE mind of man can be used in two ways to defeat or counteract the mind of Christ. In one by restricting that which is enjoined; and in the other, by advocating and pursuing *more* than is enjoined. Be the turn to the right hand or to the left, the right path has been deviated from. Now this is just the way ministry has suffered and been obstructed. On one side it was regarded as outside men in a secular position. The minister is a man among men, but, in respect to his office, placed on an eminence, with an enforced immunity from the engagements of those to whom he ministered; and consequently with permission for their continuance in them. The minister, in virtue of his position, and not because of his moral standing, is invested with a sacredness and separation from men ordinarily. His sacred office, not his personal sanctity, acquired for him this elevation and distinction. They who estimate everything as God

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estimates it, will soon see that there is no elevation in the house of God without spiritual power or gift; but no sooner has light broken in than we are exposed to a danger on the other side. Many men now, and sometimes women, having merely ability and readiness to convey their impressions, assume and undertake to declare the gospel and the word of God. Now while heartily I should say, "Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!" yet I feel that we must not lose sight of the solemn and holy business and calling of a "minister of Christ." If a man is assured that the Lord has entrusted to him a commission to preach or to teach, then he is bound to fulfil this ministry. And if this be the case, he will not only be assured himself, but the spiritual (they whose judgment is of any weight), will be able to recognize the gift of the Lord to him; and this the more distinctly, according as the mind and life of Christ, at the same time, are seen in him. It is not only that he has an inward conviction of divine light, but

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his whole being should bear marks of the gift conferred on him. Can such a gift be conferred without any moral insignia? Can I have received a commission from Christ, and have none of the sacredness, or the separation *morally* from human engrossments which the natural mind accords to a legalized minister? Is it not right to expect and demand that the minister who asserts that he has been appointed and qualified by Christ, should exhibit testimonials of his appointment morally superior to any traditional imitation? Should he not make full proof of his ministry? Is the casket to bear no evidence of the value of the jewel? Is the vessel to be indescriptive of the gift deposited in it and which is assumed to be expounded by it? It is a serious question. Is not the minister personally the exponent of the value of the truth which he presents? Ought not the evangelist to be able to say, "I would to God that not only thou but all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am except these bonds." "In all things approving our-

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selves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses," &c. (2 Cor. vi. 4-10.) Is it too much to expect that a minister should be in himself a testimony of the truth which he propounds? How is it to affect others, if it has no effect on the teacher? Hence it is said, "Be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."

There is a great difference between a minister now and a prophet of old. The latter often did not know the meaning of that which he spoke. Now we are on the ground—"I believed, therefore have I spoken." But if I believe a truth and attempt to teach it, and at the same time make no true effort to conform myself to it, do I not in my own person avow the impracticability of the truth which I minister? If I believe it, and have yielded to it, as far as I have, I can insist on the truth and its divine efficacy. And as a minister, one's power really goes no further. Souls may be awakened through any instrument in God's sovereign grace; but souls

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are not nurtured and matured by careless indifferent ministers. The minister of Christ must take Christ's place. "When he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them." The minister should say, like Gideon, "As I do, so shall ye do." (Judges vii. 17.) The evangelist points to the door—to Christ, for He is the door; but it must be from the *INSIDE*, from where he has got himself. And the one who enters through his instrumentality cannot help having his eye on the servant who has pointed out the door to him; and at his first introduction he necessarily bears in his eye the one who has got in and the sort of being he is. If worldly, he necessarily concludes, As he got in worldly, so may I. And thus, in every truth, the one who ministers, gives me my first idea of what would be the effect of the truth ministered; so that if he be worldly, I assume that I could hold that truth in a worldly condition, as well as the one who ministered it to me. Thus the ministry is blamed.

The Lord give grace that the many

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now entering His service may understand that—while they feel there can be no higher or better service, nor any work equal to the Lord's work—they may be so true to it, that they may seek to be the living exponents of the truth they minister; and thus in moral power to minister to their fellows, assuring them of the efficacy and blessedness of that which they advocate.

CONSISTENCY.

Consistency is being true to a given standard. Now the constant taunt is that there is more consistency when a lower position is assumed than when a higher one is insisted on. The pretensions are of course in keeping with the position. It is said for instance, and with some show of justice, that they who make the law the rule of life, are more consistent than they who believe and assume that Christ is their life and model in everything. Consistent to what? is the question. To the law or to Christ? But that is not the com-

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parison intended. The force of the reproach is this, that they who do not profess such high ground are on the whole better men, and less erratic, than they who do. Now we shall clear the ground immensely if we consider the position of each with regard to the standard by which his consistency can be judged of. The law addresses a man in the flesh. Christ is only known and maintained by His own Spirit. I do not disown and ignore man by the law; I cultivate and restrain him; and according as this is successful, I add to man's self-respect and self-distinction. On the contrary, as Christ is received and followed, man, as he is in the flesh, is ignored; and the Spirit, which controls and uses his body and mind, as belonging to Christ, is alone acknowledged.

Now there is a great difference between these two standards; and not only so; but the effect or demand which each has on me is vastly different. In the one case I am required to exalt men to the only true, proper, and divine elevation for a man; in the other, I am

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required to be a dead man and accept another and a higher life; and in the power of it, to impersonate Him who is the fountain and source of it to me. Surely the difference is immeasurable. And hence if I analyze the history of a disciple of each of these standards, I cannot fail to see that the one who is required to exalt himself to his highest moral point, makes a much better appearance—walks apparently with more consistency, than the one who is called to set aside self at every point, which is the ground he has professed to take, and to walk outside that which is of the flesh, in the spirit of Christ, as a heavenly man. No doubt the latter vastly surpasses the former, when he is consistent with his standard; but this can only be in proportion as he is held by the power which transfers him from his own self into Christ. If his hold on, or faith in, that power relaxes, he is worse off than one who only seeks to conform himself to the moral perfection of the law; because he has nothing to fall back upon, or to act on as to himself; his

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calling being to live *outside* himself in Christ; whereas, the other is called to live properly *in* himself. It is plain that if I make myself my study with any true purpose, I cultivate myself to exhibit a certain commendable appearance. The law was to set up the first Adam in its best estate. But if through grace I seek to live outside the first Adam, and to live Christ, I am infinitely worse off in appearance when I fall back to myself, than one who had never abandoned the old man at all. I am practically the "sow that was washed wallowing in the mire." I am like one who had been exalted to high estate now suddenly reduced to a level where every one is better off and more skilled than he is. In short, the one tries to excel in walking; the other knows that he is required to fly; and studies flying only. Hence, if he falls, he must appear more powerless than the one who walks, and whose skill in walking is commendable. No one can be so helpless or pitiable as the one who is destined to fly when he forfeits his power

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of doing so. Surely such a one must appear among walkers more incompetent and inconsistent than the feeblest walker.

Another thing has to be taken into account. The man who cultivates himself obtains commendation from men in a measure that the one who cultivates Christ will never receive or elicit. The one cultivates what exalts man, and therefore what suits man; the other, that which ignores man and which rises above him. Hence we need to be careful lest the good in man which we sometimes commend, be really of Christ or not. We must not forget that that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God; and, doubtless many a one, falling, or failing to fly, but still accepting no lower position, is more acceptable in the eye of God, than one very fair in his conduct and walk among men, who seeks only to raise himself to the standard of the law, which is the first Adam's highest elevation. The inconsistency complained of arises in fact not from the high posi-

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tion which we are called to, but from our not walking according to it. There is no fault in the high position; but it is easier to nature to walk in the lower position. But then this lower position, however commended by man, loses all its value before God when I find He has called me to the higher one, and not at all to the lower. If this be admitted, the comparison cannot be maintained. I may censure a saint for not walking up to his high position; but I cannot commend one who excuses himself for taking a position to which God has not called him, because he can walk among men more evenly therein, than in that to which God *has* called him. In fine, such an argument amounts to this; that it is better for those who are called to fly not to attempt it, but to walk; because, if they attempt to fulfil their calling, they might fall; so that it is better (in the apprehension of such reasoners) to ignore and deny our calling.

The above thoughts have been suggested by a communication from a corre-

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spondent on "high profession with low walk," concluding with the following remarks: "Doubtless it is most displeasing to God to see a high profession with a low walk; but we must remember that *God* has laid down our true position and in reality we cannot alter it. Every Christian is really in the high position, whether he owns it or not. It is in vain for any to say, Oh, I fear I cannot maintain a corresponding walk, and therefore I will take a lower position. The word is plain and positive: '*God hath quickened us (young or old, instructed or ignorant) together with Christ, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*' (Eph. ii. 5, 6.) This is our true position, and surely no one can think of taking a lower position without doing despite to the Spirit of grace, in order that his walk may be more consistent. If really a Christian, his position must remain the same. Just as an adopted son to whom, by unalterable bonds, I make over an estate, may refuse to consider himself a son, and may associate

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with the bond-servants, or even run again into distance and exile, still he is my son and the estate is his. The more shame on him if he does not appreciate it.

“Such is grace, the boundless grace of our God ! and we cannot have any lower standing. Young Christian, older pilgrim ! we are all in that high and holy place in Christ Jesus. Shall it be said of us who accredit this truth, that our walk is less steady than the walk of any who do not accredit or appreciate it ? Surely not. We cannot lower our standing if we would ; nor would we if we could. We cannot preach a lower gospel. Let us then, one and all, seek to walk more and more in the power of the Holy Ghost, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Amen.”

We are to pass across the “kingdom and patience” of Jesus Christ ere we enter “His kingdom and glory.” How fitting such a calling is. How the whole soul approves of it, though nature is never up to it, and faith but cold and feeble to adopt it.

FRAGMENTS.

Faith takes in what God says, because it looks not at the thing to be done, but at the One who can do it, so that be the thing great or small it is the same to faith.

It is the returned prodigal who is enjoying His *grace*, that should be the steward to own His *rights*. The more the soul is kept at the feast of the *Good One*, the readier and truer it will be for the claims and service of the Rich One.

It is *alone* with a person that you can only know how much such a one is to you. If you are not alone with the Lord you cannot know how sufficient He is to supply the place of every one else beside and of every thing.

What was the mark of the first action of the Spirit of God in your soul? Was it not that the Lord Jesus Christ got a place which He had not before? And if you are full of the Holy Spirit you will have no object but Christ; no thought but Christ; no end but Christ; no will but Christ.

This should be a time of increased waiting upon God. Prayer should be more and more the habit of the soul. To retire to His presence who holdeth not back the full flow of His love, though He may the strength of His arm and

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the brightness of His throne for the present. He is the Good One and the Rich One. (See Luke xv., xvi.) As the poor prodigal you own and enjoy Him in His welcoming grace and goodness. As a servant you own that *all you have is His*, and you are but a steward of it. The returned prodigal who is enjoying His grace should be the steward to own His rights. The more the soul is kept at the feast of the *Good One*, the readier and truer it will be for the claims and service of the Rich One.

TO ME TO LIVE—CHRIST.

In the bosom of the Father,
Centre of His endless love;
In the light and in the glory,
Thus in Christ I dwell above.

Filling up His bitter sufferings,
Drinking of His cup of woe,
And rejoicing as I do it,
Thus with Christ I walk below.

There above I rest, untroubled,
All my service, to adore;
Cross and shame, and death and sorrow
Left behind for evermore.

Therefore am I never weary,
Journeying onward thro' the waste,
And the bitter Marah waters
Have but sweetness to my taste.

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Whilst He tells the wondrous secret
Of His perfect love to me,
Whilst His heart's exhaustless fulness
In His blessed face I see.

Can there be but joy and glory,
In His cross and shame below?
Sweet each mark of His rejection,
Where His steps are, I must go.

One the path, and one the sorrow—
Path the angels cannot tread;
Sorrow giving sweet assurance;
We are members, He the Head.

There on high that path will bring us
To the place where He is gone;
Thus, the silver trumpets* sounding,
Through the waste we journey on.

1867.

* Numbers x. "The silver trumpets served for the calling of the people for the journeying of the camps, and also for other purposes. It was the testimony of God, rendered publicly, with two chief ends in view: to gather the people, and to make them journey. . . . The testimony of God was the sign of His intervention, whilst at the same time its result was to produce it. The priests who, in communion with their head, were to be in the intimacy of the thoughts of God, sounded the trumpets when needed. All was thus done according to communion with God in His sanctuary."

LIGHT IN A DAY OF DIFFICULTY.

PART VI.

THE NATURE AND ORDER OF GOD'S DWELLING-PLACE.

To one who in purpose of heart is set on following the Lord, and who is sensibly alive to the truth that "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever," the first inquiry must be, What is the nature and order of God's house during the period of our Lord's absence? It is of all importance that I should have a clear, definite idea of what His house was in its *first* estate and intention; for if I do not know what it was, or the order in which it was first set up, I cannot have any clear or practical idea of what I should accept or what refuse in *this* day. The true way of discovering how much the Church has failed is by comparing the present state of things with the divine order and institution, or rather to obtain from scripture (as I shall attempt in this paper) what was the nature and order of the Church on earth. Need I say that this is a subject

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of the utmost interest to the true follower of his Master? The faithful servant, no matter in what period of time he finds himself, desires, like David of old, to find Him a dwelling-place. Can such an one be content to be in it without any effort to separate from what does not become God's house? If I know that He who loves me best has a dwelling-place here, and one where I know I may meet Him, then surely the heart demands that I should reach Him there, and be in the state in which He can manifest Himself to me.

Now, He *has* a habitation here. In Ephesians ii. it is written, "We are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," and the terms of this are very simple. God dwells with us; not as with men in the flesh as He did with Israel; but "through the Spirit." This limitation, "through the Spirit," is of all importance, and it is the overlooking of the force and distinctiveness conveyed in those three words which has given rise to all the confusion in Christendom.

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Keeping in mind these words as describing and determining the great principle of God's habitation, we may proceed to examine the features or order which were derived from this fundamental principle. The Church, every student of scripture will admit, was first set up on the descent of the Holy Ghost. There were many saints before it, and they are a heavenly company; but the Church of the firstborn was not called out until after the resurrection of Christ and the subsequent descent of the Holy Ghost. Hence in Acts ii. we have the first presentation of the Church on earth, and from the description given of it there we arrive at some of the main features of this new and spiritual habitation for God on earth: "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" and again, Acts iv. 32, "The multitude of them that believed were of one accord and of one mind." Very briefly do I refer to this first Church; for as they were all Jews, and as the re-

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jection of the risen Lord had not yet been consummated, there was still a lingering connection with the Mosaic system; and though baptized by the Holy Ghost, and thus the habitation of God through the Spirit, they were still linked with the earthly hopes of Israel, which, I need scarcely add, no Gentile now could be connected with; and therefore, while I see the power of the Holy Ghost on the earth to form such a mass of persons (exceeding 8,000) into oneness, apart from all selfishness, I do not rest on this scripture merely for instruction as to the nature and order of the Church of the living God. I see its origin and character here in connection with the earthly temple; and I see that ere long, in the stoning of Stephen, the citizens sent a message after the Heir (Luke xix. 14), saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And I find the apostle of the circumcision (Peter) writing not to a church at Jerusalem, but to the saints scattered abroad (1 Peter i. 1); and instead of telling them to expect

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Christ on earth, as he had in the beginning of the Acts, he tells them of the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, reserved in heaven" for them; and that they were living stones built on the Living Stone, a spiritual house. Nothing could be more distinct or more different from their once Jewish hopes and ways. Furthermore, it was to the Apostle Paul, consequent on the rejection of Christ by the Jews, that the order and nature of the Church was committed. Hence, in 1 Corinthians iii., the apostle states that as a wise master-builder he has laid the foundation, which is Jesus Christ. And he goes on to warn any one how he builds thereon, for "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

I have said that what the house of God was, when *first* set up, in its order is the first step, the only clue for ascertaining, not only how far we have departed from it; but also as the only basis for our course now. In this paper I confine myself to the simple question,

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What is the nature or order of God's habitation? The fundamental principle is that it is in the Spirit; and that just as in Israel, the earthly temple was God's dwelling-place before the eyes of men, so now saints builded together are His dwelling-place through the Spirit. The Spirit is the medium, so to speak, by which the dwelling is secured; and the saints builded together by the Spirit then know that God is now dwelling with them through the Spirit. The order at first was simply this—that the Holy Ghost was the bond of union and power. They were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, and this by the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, as we have seen from Acts ii., &c., before the constitution of the Church was unfolded. Let but this simple principle be accepted and the ground will be immensely cleared of difficulties. The presence of the Holy Ghost built saints together, and this was God's habitation through the Spirit. The Spirit's presence determines the whole thing. He maintains the Church at first in unity

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and outside self before the doctrine of the unity had been revealed. The saints gathered together on this principle were builded together by the Spirit of God on Jesus Christ, the only foundation. No other foundation could any man lay but that which is laid. No one ought to have built anything on it but what was of Jesus Christ; anything not of Him was wood, hay, stubble, and the fire would burn it. But here it was, that the servants failed to see and observe the true nature and order of the house of God. People were admitted who were not of Christ, and while the habitation of God through the Spirit remained a fact, because the Holy Ghost remains here, the saints lost the sense and blessing of His dwelling, because they were not builded together; or at least by not seeing this truth, or walking in it by faith, they became openly mixed up with the hay, wood, and stubble. The Church at first was a company baptized by one Spirit into one body—"the Christ" (see 1 Cor. xii. 12)—where God had His dwelling through

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the Spirit. In my next paper I shall endeavour to trace the lapse of the Church from its original order; but there can be no correct idea of its failure except in proportion as its first order is known. At first it was the house of God, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth. What else could it be? The foundation was Jesus Christ; the saints builded together thereon, a habitation of God through the Spirit. Hence, as Christ's body, as we see from 1 Corinthians xii., there were diversities of gifts, but through the same Spirit; and diversities of administrations, but the same Lord; and diversities of operations, but one God that worketh all in all. To each was given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. Who can contemplate and grasp, in any little measure, what such an assembly presented, and not be dismayed and humbled at the indifference which on all hands is betrayed to our present church state? What a wonder and a blessing was the spiritual house, the pillar and ground of truth; the ex-

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pression of God's power corporately on the earth; the body of Christ enriched by Him from heaven in all the strength and grace of Himself, so that now were made known to the powers and principalities by it the manifold wisdom of God! Surely the more we study the scriptures, the more must we be convinced of the meagreness of our preconceived ideas of what the Church as first set up was; and a feeble apprehension of this must impart feebleness to our search and desire after the true thing. Doubtless, here lies the root of much of the confusion and pretension of the present day. Few have carefully and anxiously examined the word of God in His presence in order to arrive at the nature and order of His house now. They have contented themselves with correcting the flagrant abuses of the things they are connected with, instead of boldly and heartily discarding everything of man; refusing all human glosses, devotedly returning in purpose of heart and faith to the first great principle— "*through the Spirit;*" and

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starting from this ground, accepting nothing out of Jesus Christ. Then, no matter how little might be vouchsafed, all would be of God, and that would be enough for the saint and faithful in Christ Jesus.

THE LARGE PLACE.

(Mark viii. 11—21.)

THE large place is resurrection ground. It is the new ground where I am before God, accepted in the Beloved, and apart from myself. The first thing learned there, imparts a character to everything, and gives me my true character and power.

In Mark viii. 12, &c., we find the Lord Jesus "sighing deeply in spirit." Distressed at the unbelief of the nation, He leaves them, enters into a ship and departs to the other side. "Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf." It is this position

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which offers the suited opportunity to our blessed Lord to set forth the large place to which they were called. He first charges them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod." He presses on them that they should watch against that leaven which wrought in the Pharisees and in Herod, and prevented them from receiving Him and resting in Him as the source of all blessing. He has them now in circumstances to teach them this great lesson. The ship is on the sea without bread. They have no resources; but He is with them. The circumstances are just the suited ones for exercising their souls, and leading them into the rest which faith gives, when it sees no one to lean on; and the resource is only in God, who is present, for Christ is with them. But they, like ourselves, do not understand the lesson which the Lord would teach them. "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread." With us, whether in our private circumstances

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or in the Church, when we are placed where there is no visible resource, the first and great thing which hinders our blessing and occupies our mind, is the attempt to account for His warning, which we do not understand, by blaming ourselves for our want of prudence and foresight. The tendency is to be occupied with the failure and necessity, rather than with Him, who in His mercy is present to help us, and to satisfy our hearts in Himself. Here they are in a ship at sea without bread; no circumstances could be more resourceless; but He is with them, and this they have now to learn is sufficient. It is the large place—the resurrection ground. It is the continent of blessing which gladdened a Simeon when he had the child Jesus in his arms. It is that shore on which the dying thief landed; that spot which Paul knew was “far better” than any here; that unknown land, which, in spirit, we all enter on sooner or later; be it on a death-bed, or as bereaved of everything here. It is in fact the landing-place, and thus the

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great lesson in resurrection life; for it is the soul finding out that it has nothing but Christ, and what He, blessed be His name, is, in all His sufficiency. Before we reach this, we are like the disciples, truly loving Him, and knowing Him as our Saviour; but never yet having stood outside everything, to find that He is enough for us, when there is nothing else. But not only so (for this is only the beginning), we find here also how fully He satisfies the heart, and makes up for everything. If a Simeon, or a dying thief, or the martyr Stephen, found Him everything to them, why should we wait for dissolution of the body, or of all here, to learn this full and blessed lesson? Surely Paul had not to wait for either for it. But learnt it must be, in one way or another. We shrink from being in a ship at sea with nothing in it but Christ; and yet it is there we learn for the first time, His full value. The mercies of a former day tell us who He is, and He calls His disciples to understand who He is, on account of them; but He Himself is

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greater than His mercies. The mercies may teach us *who* He is, but it is when we have none apparently, that we learn *what* He is. This, I repeat, is resurrection ground; the large place where He sets our feet. *Without* resources, but *with* Christ—having nothing but Christ. Is He then sufficient, or is He not? This is the great lesson of the new ground; and this is resurrection; for it is where I enter into the power and resources of the life of Christ. No soul can know consciously what Christ is, as to resource, above all the claims of nature, until it has learned this lesson. Abraham learned it when he ascended Mount Moriah, prepared in heart to extinguish the only light which cheered his eye on earth; and at no time did his soul more enter into or comprehend what God was in His own might and majesty, than at that eventful moment. One's heart aches as it follows him up that solitary ascent, while one's spirit owns and exults that each step was only a deeper conviction of the greatness of the God in whom he trusted. Then it

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was that Abraham was prepared for the deepest communications from God. And assuredly, until we have entered this large place—until we have found Christ, not only as our Saviour, saving us out of the depth of our ruin and sin; but the One on the shore, who is enough for us when there is nothing else; we are not prepared for deeper revelations. It is this lesson which prepares us for all the rest, and which really makes us ready for it; for the rest is but the unfolding of the things connected with Christ, whom we have now found to be the resource of our heart; and this not only in our own individual history, but also in the Church, and as His witnesses on earth; for after all, there is no true standing publicly, which has not been learned individually. If, in my private history, I know Christ as my resource, when there is nothing else, I shall not find it difficult to see that He is enough for me in the Church. If He stands beside me, all men may forsake me, and I, unmoved, like Paul, can confront the most dread tribunal in the world! To

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know Him and His sufficiency apart from everything else, is necessarily at the entrance of my life in Him. He saves us, and because He lives, we live also; but the moment I begin to know that He is my life fully, it is no longer I, but Christ liveth in me, and hence it is Himself who first meets me. He is the head which I am to hold, and from which all nourishment flows. What He is alone, without all else, is the lesson which gives character and strength to the soul, and which is learned and cultivated by every one who enjoys solitude with Him. If He be not resource enough for my soul alone with Him, surely I have not learned that He surpasses all things; nor could I bear to be deprived of everything here, or to confront all, powerfully and fearlessly.

This great lesson of resurrection life we begin to learn when we feel that retirement from everything and everyone to Himself is full rest and solace to the heart. For the less question there is between Him and me, the more shall I seek to be alone with Him: because

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alone with Him, I am prepared for explanation and correction from Him, which I should not have received, or noticed in the crowd. If I have wandered from Him, I shall fear being alone with Him; and yet, if I have known what a resource He is to my heart alone, I shall be miserable until I find myself again alone with Him, and have heard His correction which restores and invigorates my soul. Thus in our ordinary intercourse, this great lesson, this entrance into the large place, is taught to our souls. And as we know Him to be sufficient for us, two things are apparent in our course; one, that we can bear the loss of anything, because He is our resource; the other, that we fear not any power that may oppose us, because He is near us.

May our souls, blessed Lord, grow in the knowledge of thy worth and excellency ! Amen.

THE FATHER'S BUSINESS.

“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”

WHICH of us could make that calm, confident appeal to those who know us best? It was made too by one scarcely more than a child. Who among us could have uttered it at twelve years of age? But *His* ways had been such that he could appeal to His mother as though she ought to have known from the whole tenor of His life what He was occupied with.

But, you may say, He was not a mere child or a mere man. That is true; but Philippians iii. shews how a man of like passions with ourselves may tread the same path, seeing and estimating the beauty of Christ so as to learn to reckon all else but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Having found himself brought to God by the death of the Lord as his substitute, and the resurrection of Christ as his righteousness, he found everything down here against him and his position

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like that of Christ. He had learnt to say, "Abba Father." As a child his thought becomes thus:—I want to be like Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. He carried no bag, like Judas, into which he could put the things of earth. They were but dross, and the whole world was to him a place savouring of the murder of Christ, and it produced in him revolt and disgust.

The power of Nazariteship comes from the knowledge of substitution. Crucified with Christ and raised up together with Him, I like to walk as He did in the world, to have the life He had, when raised from the dead manifested in my ways. How few have this even as their aim and object! How few seek thus to track out Christ! What will produce it? Oh! if you and I could say, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business," we should find ourselves in the fellowship of His sufferings at once. My Father has business still to be done down here. Does this thought enter into our souls, when sitting round the table we commemorate the

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death of our Lord? By His Spirit we can find out what part of that business He puts on us; and let us do that, letting self and the world clean go. The extent to which simple faith in that fact would bring us into treading the same path as Christ trod, and giving power to be like Him, is greater than we know. Christ has brought us—put us in our right places—you in one, me in another, where there may be suffering, or no suffering, but as *He* likes, and where there is “my Father’s business” to be done. To do it must be the purpose of our hearts. Have you purpose of heart? What is it? Look at the needle quivering restlessly till it has turned to the north. There is purpose there. “Whose service is perfect freedom” should be our word. What am I doing? Minding the Father’s business for me. What is my confidence as to what lies before me? What would it *not* be, if I sought but the Father’s will—desired nothing else—had confidence in His wisdom and in His power, and wished for nothing save His will? How

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could I possibly fear if *I* had no business but my Father's will?

"I have no care, my blessed Lord,
For all my cares are Thine."

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THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Cor. xi.

THE thought of God in every revelation of His mind is that which pre-eminently gives us a clue to its value, and it is also an unchanging source of strength and blessing to us. Oftentimes His revelations are studied and observed, more with reference to the good which may result to us from them; than in order to acquire an idea of His own purpose in giving them.

The thought of our Lord in calling His beloved ones around Him "in the night in which He was betrayed," unfolds to us above all others the true idea of the Lord's supper. *It was the night in which He was betrayed; when*

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everything here was coming to an end. Then it was, we read, that "He took bread when He had given thanks" He owned to God the grace and favour of giving the bread; for He Himself was the bread of God which came down from heaven; and He can give thanks for it—a thanks which finds an echo in our hearts. But this is not all. The bread for which He gives thanks, and for which thanksgiving fills our souls, He *breaks*. He gives Himself to death. The blessed One dies here for those under death. His broken body opens a way for His beloved ones out of the charnel-house which all here is. He desires (and this is His purpose) that we, His own, should be kept in remembrance of Him, in the way, and at the moment, in which He, by breaking His body, has opened a way for us, into His life. It is not here (i.e., in this remembrance of Him) that He would teach us the value of his death; the *appropriation* of it, as in John vi; but here He would so connect us with Himself, at this moment, that we might feel and

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know, that as He has no longer a link to this scene, neither have we. That we, while remaining in the scene, may not resume links with it; but, on the contrary, that our chief expression and joy of heart may be, in remembering Him, at the moment when He brake His body for us, and thus opened a way for us, out of death, into His own life. The thought of His heart is to connect us, who are still in the scene, which is under judgment, with Himself, in that moment, on this earth, when He, by His death delivered us from it.

“After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped [or after supper], saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” The new testament in which we now stand, is through His blood, and while we are here, and while He is absent, we drink this cup, in remembrance of Him. It is not that we come to it, to derive a benefit from His bloodshedding; but we come to remember Him who, by His bloodshedding, has

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placed us in the new covenant. It is because we are in this new covenant, that we meet this desire of His heart, that we should remember Him, at that moment, and in that act, by which He placed us in a new covenant, and thus necessarily apart from all that under which we lay. It is here on earth, where we are surrounded with all *not* in covenant with God, that we drink this cup, and remember Him who, by His bloodshedding, has placed us *in* covenant, even while we are still in a scene, in itself at a distance from God. The one simple desire of the heart of Christ is, that we should remember Him while we are in this scene, at the moment, and in the manner by which He delivered us from it, and its judgment. Hence it is *where* He freed us from it all, that He necessarily attaches us unto Himself; not that I should be occupied with the deliverance, but with the *Deliverer*; and as I am occupied with Him, I am in heart and spirit rejoicing to be in Him outside of it all. No one can be truly in this

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remembrance but as He is apart and outside of all that from which the death of Christ separates him. It is not His resurrection that He brings before me, it is His own *death*; to remember Him in His *death*; in the scene where it took place, and where I still am, and where He is not. It is *here* and in this state, that I remember Him. If it were resurrection, it would be rising out of it; it would be passing from the death to the fruits of it; but it is in His *death* (in the scene and circumstances which required it), that He calls me to remember Him; and as I do, I know, and feel, and place myself outside of all here; I dissociate myself from everything here which required His death, and my heart is occupied in remembering Him, at the moment, when He gave His body to be broken, and His blood to be shed, in order to free me from all that is around me. It is the stones erected in the midst of Jordan. (See Joshua iv. 9.) It speaks to the heart—O! how deeply and touchingly, of the only one thing on earth which interests me, if I

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be true to Christ; of that one singular event which separates me from all here, but which connects me with Him, when He broke all natural links with the earth, in order to open out for me "a new and living way through the veil, that is to say His flesh." It is impossible for any one truly to remember Him in His death, and to minister to self, that for which He died. If I "discern the Lord's body," if I am eating "worthily," I am remembering Him in His broken body and shed blood; and necessarily, I am not occupied with that which has been judged in His death. I discern His body; I judge myself. If I see Him dying for me, I cannot maintain myself. The two cannot exist together, the death and the thing judged in death. If I see Him in His death, I must judge, ignore myself. I have not remembered Him in His death, I have not discerned the Lord's body, if I have myself before me as my object. In the presence of Christ's broken body, I must judge that self of mine for which it was broken. I must allow it no

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place whatever; and be occupied with Him apart from, and outside of it.

In 1 Corinthians x. the saints in company are the expression on earth, during the absence of Christ, of His death. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" We together have communion with His body, and in concert, as by the one loaf, we make this expression. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" It is that we are thus together in communion with it. Each has already partaken of its value; and by one cup we express our unity. We have unity through the Spirit, and hence our acts are declarative of our *unity*.

"THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

..... "In remembrance of me..... the Lord's death
till he come."

O! gracious Saviour, holy Lord!
With loyal hearts we hear that word
Of dear request from thee;
Now uttered from the Father's throne,
In living accents to thine own—
In death "remember me."

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We come, Lord Jesus! to recall
That great transcendent hour, when all
 God's billows o'er thee rolled;
With thee, in dear remembrance turn,
With souls that glow, with hearts that yearn,
 In death thee to behold!

All question of our moral stain—
Our God resolved (when thou didst drain
 The cup of wrath for sin)—
So surely, that our hearts are free
To lose themselves in thoughts of thee,
 In fellowship with Him.

Borne in thy heart through death's dark tide,
(The travail thine) *in* thee we died—
 With thee we rise on high:
Our eye, now filled with glory's light,
Would travel through thine hour of night,
 When *thou*, our Lord, didst die!

Aye, night! when God, the God of grace,
From His own Son must veil His face,
 Though man that Son denied:
Earth stood in shadow, shook with dread,
Then wrapt her weeds about thy head,
 As if her shame to hide;

But could not, for the Father's heart
Yearned, till it set thee where thou art,
 And gave thee full redress.
Now, free its fulness to disclose—
Its love—a mighty volume flows—
 In strength of righteousness.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

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Lost in that love, thy death we deem
 Our point of sev'rance from the scene,
 Where man our Lord did spurn.
 To us, earth stands in shadow now—
For thou art absent—until thou,
 Lord Jesus, shalt return!

Till then, nor time, nor place we know,
 But stand expectant; while we shew
 Thy death, till thou return:
 Thy death—thy glory, our sole date—
 Backwards and forwards (as we wait)
 The eye of faith must turn.

Amen, Lord Jesus! fuller still
 Our hearts with death and glory fill,
 Until their weeds shall be
 Exchanged for bridal garments bright;
 And faith itself be lost in sight;
And we be lost in thee!

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

It is a truth of the very deepest value to the soul at all times, and very specially in this day of ours, that God claims our *immediate confidence* in Him, demanding of us that we are fixed enough in Him, without aid from the creature, or carnal provisions, to give entire rest and satisfaction to the conscience. The Gospel of John, the

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Epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews, all enforce this, though in different ways. Immediate confidence in God is the result of faith. It is that which the doctrine of faith, so to speak, proposes to itself, and leads the soul into.

In the Epistle to the Romans the sinner is *alone* with God. It is like Jesus taking the blind man or the palsied man aside from the multitude, and then, in solitude, speaking to him, touching him, healing him, ere He sends Him back to his companions. It is like the Lord of Israel meeting the leper outside the camp all alone, and then sending him back healed to the camp. The sinner is not addressed in his social place, in the progress of the Epistle to the Romans, till he have tasted of mercy to himself. (Chap. xii. 1.)

The Galatians had departed from this confidence in God, and the business of the apostle under the Holy Ghost is to bring them back to it. This he does by presenting to them a number of *immediate* instances (so to call them) of God

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dealing directly with us, as when He called Paul to his apostleship and the Galatian saints to the gospel. (Ver. 1-6.)

The Hebrews were not as yet, like the Galatians, withdrawn from this gospel of *immediate confidence in God*, the doctrine of faith; but they were under temptation of being so. He seeks to fortify them, by exhibiting the vanity and imperfection of all the things which their own system provided and by asserting the sufficiency and adequacy of all that Christ had brought to them, because of the value of His person; so that in coming to and trusting in Him, they had come to and trusted in God. Their religion was the religion of *immediate*, personal, confidence in God.

Jacob lost the power of the name of God in Genesis xxxii. He had to inquire after it, instead of using and enjoying it. That name was "Almighty;" but Jacob had been contriving for himself, instead of dwelling under the Almighty's shadow. He had lost the power of the name. And do not we often lose the power of the name now

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revealed—that is, “Father?” Such a name is fitted to give abiding calmness, and strength, and liberty to the soul. It is fitted to give a dwelling-place, a home, to the heart. It is enough to make our joy to be full, as John tells us. If we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, what unlimited blessedness is ours in spirit now! What was the delight of the Father in the Son even when bruising Him! His hand was heavy on Him indeed, as made sin for us; but His delight in Him personally, was infinite and immeasurable. And if we be at times under His hand for *discipline*, as Jesus was for *bruising*; still we are to know the full, secret, unchanged love of a Father. We have, like Jacob, lost His name, if it be otherwise with our souls. It is not God merely, but our “Father,” who, the Lord tells us, numbers the hairs of our head; and if in any of the details of human trial we are not in the joy of a Father’s love, we have lost the name, like the patriarch.

LIGHT IN A DAY OF DIFFICULTY.

PART VII.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER.

THAT the Holy Ghost is on the earth is the great truth which determines God's house now. If the Holy Ghost were not here, God would not now have a house on earth. And hence, it is according as I have faith in the Holy Ghost, as present on earth, that I receive of Him light and instruction, as to what suits God, and power and wisdom, to turn away from everything unsuited to Him.

We have noticed in a former paper that the servants of Christ had not walked watchfully, but had introduced unbelievers into the house of God, where the Spirit of God built saints together for the habitation of God; and thus, instead of each being builded together by the Spirit, there was nothing but a carnal bond; and in a little time, the carnal element betrayed itself, in every form of corruption. The unsuited elevation and position to which flesh was raised by admission into the Church,

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became a temptation and an opportunity to the flesh, to assume and assert what was not only not of God, but what was grossly opposed to Him and to His word. Can any one quietly and calmly retrace the history of the Church on earth; having seized the great principle of its constitution (viz., the Holy Ghost being here, by whom souls are builded together for an habitation of God); and not see that, through the admission into the assembly of those who could not be builded together, the power and presence of the Holy Ghost was practically denied; or at least, not simply believed in? and thus not only was the Holy Ghost hindered in the midst, but saints lost in company the sense of being builded together; in a word, faith, as to the presence and effect of the Holy Ghost waned in the Church of God! There may be faithfulness in one place more than in another and consequent gain; there was, for instance, more faithfulness in Philadelphia than in Thyatira, yet still the Spirit, who is the unity and the funda-

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mental principle, was grieved and hindered, and the most faithful suffered as to manifestation, though there was joy and refreshment in Christ, according as faithfulness to Him was preserved. The great point is, to see what was the first point of departure. Jesus Christ was the foundation; no other foundation could any man lay; and if love to Him declined, it is easy to see that there would be a corresponding disregard of the Holy Ghost, who here was testifying of Him. I could not have my heart on Christ fully now, without knowing and owning the place which the Holy Ghost holds here for Him. Hence, if I am believing in Christ, out of my "belly shall flow rivers of living water." And when the heart is true to Christ, and occupied with Him, there is ever an awakening to the place of the Holy Ghost here on earth, and a growing intelligence as to His power and testimony. The amount of the confusion may be almost overwhelming; but the moment the presence of the Holy Ghost is accepted and known to faith, there

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is a consciousness of having reached a point, where one is empowered to separate from what is not suited to God's dwelling-place, and also an ability and intelligence to do what is suitable and acceptable to Him. And, as we have already noticed, the claim of holiness to the Lord is not only recognized but maintained. It is important that this claim should be distinctly acknowledged by the conscience, and then, when the nature of God's dwelling-place, as in His mind, has been learned, there remains only to know my duty and my power to fulfil it.

In scripture we cannot fail to see that the saints were builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; and that the house of God became corrupted when those who were not saints were admitted, and the bond of the one Spirit was not insisted on, or believed in. Love to Christ personally waned; and the place and presence of the Holy Ghost was practically lost to the saints. Hence, the flesh being suffered to take a place entirely

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above itself, assuming a status which should have ignored it, broke out into more shameful and ungodly excesses, than the world which made no such pretension. All the apostolic writers, in fearful language, describe to us the grossness of the flesh which had been allowed to grow up and teach in the Church, the house of God. Surely, love for Christ and faith in the presence of the Holy Ghost, would have preserved any saint from assenting to such abuses. It cannot be denied that the flesh has been permitted to take the place of supremacy in the house of God (for while the Spirit is here, we have, within the range of His actings on souls, the house of God). Where saints have failed is, first in personal love to Christ, and next (which would have followed), faith in the Spirit's presence. When they thus failed, the flesh had the mastery, and the assembly of God became the platform for the exhibition of the worst kind of flesh; even a flesh assuming to be Christian, and to do Christ's work on earth, while

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it denied Him, by whom *it* was crucified and disowned, and denied the Spirit's presence, by whom *it* would have been effectually opposed and cast out. Nothing could be more sinful and terrific than the departure of the Church from its first standing; and all because the flesh, which would have been excluded if the Church of God had held its true ground, was allowed a place from which in a little time it grew into monstrous and hideous proportions. So much so, that even before the removal of Paul we find him writing to Timothy, and instructing him how he ought to act, when the house of God had become like a "great house where there were vessels to honour and to dishonour;" when men, well known, and once accredited, were daring enough to teach that the resurrection was past already (2 Tim. ii. 18); when saints feared not to suffer among them such teachers; nay more, to listen to such teaching, so that the faith of some was overthrown. What was the house of God come to? Oh, how sad it ought to be to our hearts!

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But we are not without a resource, thank God, as to our duty and power, under such circumstances. "If a man purge himself from these (the vessels to dishonour), he shall be a vessel to honour, and meet for the master's use." If I "remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David raised from the dead according to my gospel" (2 Tim. ii.) I am strengthened by the Holy Ghost here on earth to separate from what is unbecoming the house of God, from what is still going on in His house. I am in the house a pattern, through grace, of what all saints should be; and I follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them which call on the Lord out of a pure heart. I seek companions in keeping with the Spirit's counsel, as to what is due to Christ and God's house. Could a saint, walking in personal love to Christ, and understanding in any measure how that holiness becomes the house of the Lord for ever, submit for a moment to be intermixed openly and knowingly with every sort of carnal assumption and assertion respecting God.

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and His things? The very thought of it is enough to shock the heart and to awaken high and mighty resolves to purge oneself from every vessel to dishonour. And as one is true to Christ, faith revives and the presence and power of the Holy Ghost is looked for and known to the soul, and the work of separation is easy and with divine effect. According as I am for Christ, I am in fellowship with the Holy Ghost; and though nothing in myself, I have with me the strength of God, and the testimony of God, for I am sustained by Him who is here to bear witness to Christ. I respond to the exhortation of Jude: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God and of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." My duty is distinct, and my power to fulfil it in proportion as I observe it. It is *simple* too. As belonging to Christ, I

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demand to be here absolutely for Him, apart from all that which He condemned in His cross. And as I am, I am supported by, and in fellowship with, the Holy Ghost, who is here to bear witness to Him and to build the saints together for an habitation of God in the Spirit. My duty leads me to the power that enables me happily to do my duty to Christ.

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PART IV.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

IF we do not understand how God has redeemed us and made us anew in Christ, we shall neither understand what sin fully is, nor know in our souls how we are cleared from it. Every one in Christ is a new creation—and born of God, doth not commit sin. God, as we have seen, has created us anew in Christ Jesus, having judged the old man, which was under judgment in the cross

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of His Son, and thus after God we are created in righteousness and true holiness; so that if Christ be in us the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness; and our business now is to walk in the Spirit, for if we through the Spirit (being in the Spirit ensures it) do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. We are not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh, and hence John writes: "I write these things that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John ii. 1.) Properly, we ought not to commit sins. We are called into a new existence, and we do not commit sins while we walk in it. We sin when we return to that from which we have been delivered by the death of Christ. Like a Nazarite who has suddenly touched a bone or a dead body, there is a reviving of that which has been judged in Christ, and a turning aside, be it even but for a moment, from that which we have acquired through His death. There is, then, a double loss.

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There is a grieving of the Spirit and a stain on our own conscience. I am a new being in Christ Jesus, and I ought not to return to that which has been judged in the cross, and which I am glad to be delivered from. Many will say (ah, the heart says it often and bitterly!), Why do I go back to it? Why did Peter act so painfully? The answer is, You have not sufficiently learnt the terribleness of it, or you would cleave in heart more to Christ as the source of strength, and so have no confidence in the flesh. We first loathe the manna—the bread from heaven—before we fall into the will and lust of the flesh; for if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The new man is supported against the old by the Spirit of Christ, and we are left here to learn His grace, and to be a witness of it during His absence. The fact is, the old man ought to be supplanted by the new man, through the Spirit; and where it is not so, I am conscious of sinning. I, a redeemed one, and in a new nature, have been defiled

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by that from which I have been redeemed, and I have to be cleansed from it. Nothing less than this will do for me, because the sin is of the old man, from which I have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and it grieves the Spirit and my new nature. The thought of foolishness is sin, and no deprecating it in anywise mitigates the fact, if the fact occurs. As God sees the flesh I see it now, for I am in the light. I must be cleansed from it. I ought not to sin; but if I do sin, I have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Before the death of Christ no saint could come before God but by sacrifice. How could one under judgment at any time come before Him but through an atonement, by faith owning what God required? The more we understand God in His nature, the more we shall see that this is plain and necessary. While man is in his first standing under judgment,

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there could be no approach to God but through an atonement. The blood of the sacrifice must be shed before the one under judgment could come before God; and this was ever and continually. Every time he presented himself before God, a sacrifice must be offered, and its blood presented by the priest. But now, since the death of Christ, He is *the propitiation for our sins*. There is no more offering for sin, nor of course *can* there be, if the old man that was under judgment has been judged. Were there any more offering for it, such offering would be an avowal that it had not been judged; but if it *has* been judged in Him who bore the judgment of it, then the efficacy of this is maintained by Him for me in the presence of God; and if I revive what has been judged, and do violence to His mercy, I have to confess my sins, because my heart rests on the wondrous truth that He ever liveth to make intercession for me. I do not seek another sacrifice; for if I did, it would be a denial that the old man was judged

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in the cross. But I seek restoration of soul, because of the efficacy of the blood-shedding, in virtue of an atonement which had fully met and had been a perfect set-off for me, and in such sort that my old man is set aside as dead. So that I am no longer under judgment; nor am I reckoned as of that race which was under judgment, seeing the judgment has been borne for me. If the old man still continues, then a full and perfect sacrifice has not been offered for me; but if it has, then that which was under judgment has no longer a standing, being judged in the cross. The judgment is the forfeiture of life, because of sin; hence the life must go, or the judgment could not be executed; but the Son of God, having borne the judgment, rises out of it, and sets me (a believer in Him) in His own life. It is important to see that it is death (the forfeiture of life) because of sin which is the judgment on me, and that which is required in the sacrifice. Hence, no one could be an atonement for me but the Son of God, for no other man had a life

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that was not already forfeited. If this be not seen and understood, the atonement will never be apprehended aright. The Son of God, because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that hath the power of death. He condemned sin in the flesh. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He gave His life a ransom for many. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit. The judgment which rested on me was the forfeiture of my life because of sin. Christ bore this penalty. He suffered a sinner's judgment; and now, as believing in God, I am alive in Christ, my old man being judged in the cross. This is atonement. If the judgment has been borne in the person of the Son of God, I, as believing in Him, am redeemed from the being on which the judgment rested, and I have *His* life—eternal life. The two things come at one and the same moment. I am released from judgment by the death of the Son of God, and

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I am created anew in Him, who has risen out of it. My judgment borne in His death, and my life secured in His life. I am not in His life, if He has not been in death for me, for I am still under judgment; but if He *has* been in death for me, then I am no longer in the forfeited life, but in His who paid the forfeit in His own death, and who has risen out of that death. Surely then I have no right to return to that which has been judged in the cross: and if I do, it is sin, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. There cannot be any other atonement, and if I think there is, I deny the one perfect sacrifice. I assume that there has not been an atonement for man. The atonement must be wrought by one who, personally free, and having a personal excellency, bore the judgment resting on man. If this judgment has been borne, it cannot be borne again, for the being is gone in judgment. Hence, if I return to the flesh, my only way of restoration before God is on the ground that I had no right to return to that

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which was judged; but that, it being judged, Christ being the propitiation for my sins, I rest in Him as my advocate with the Father, and confess my sins; I repudiate that which I had returned to, and out of which I have been redeemed. And hence, I do not wait to judge it, until I am exposed or condemned by another or the law; on the contrary I expose myself, and my restoration and blessing depend on the extent of my own repudiation of my practical departure from my true standing in Christ. If I confess my sins, He is faithful and just to forgive me my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. God has condemned sin in the flesh, and He is faithful and just to forgive me my sins when I confess them to Him, as being of that which He has condemned in the cross. I am not only conscious of having sinned, but also of having returned to that which has been judged in the cross of Christ; so that in fact the confession of my sin deepens in my soul the burden and evil of the old man, and works a thorough abhorrence

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of it, which is repentance. It is not simply seeking forgiveness, but it is a confession of that which *needs* forgiveness. There is no sense of that demand on me which the law exacts; but there is a far more grievous sense, that I have yielded to that which was evil, and which was outside of my place in Christ, and I repudiate it and judge myself, and literally take God's side against myself, and am restored and righted before God, as by faith I rest on Jesus Christ the righteous, confessing all that into which I had wandered. We are now in the light, set there by grace where the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin, but yet I cannot say that I have no *sin*, for sin dwelleth in me, but I ought not to *commit* sin. I ought not to yield to it, but if I sin and confess my *sins*, He is faithful and just to forgive me my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness, seeing that I seek an exemption from them, not because I have a fresh sacrifice or offset for them, but because of my Advocate, Jesus Christ, the

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righteous, who undertakes all for me, and who is now the fountain of all my blessing and life before God. I discard my old man and its deeds: I denounce my sins, and then God in His faithfulness and justice, having condemned sin in the cross, exonerates me from them, forgives me, and cleanses me from all unrighteousness—from the soil which I had contracted. The burden of the sin and the effect of it are both removed, and I am practically restored to my true and happy place in His light and presence.

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“YE ARE MY FRIENDS.”

THE Lord says to His disciples, “I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

The evidence or mark, then, of being His friend, and not merely a servant, is

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that I know what my Lord doeth, and that I have received a knowledge of His mind. He is a servant who does not know his lord's mind: he is a friend who knows the mind of Christ. If the Lord communicates His mind to me, He regards me as His friend. If He does not communicate His mind to me, I am, however devoted, no higher than a servant. To be a friend to any one, I must necessarily take an interest in his concerns. It is in the assurance that I have this interest that I can be regarded as a friend, or can care to be one; but if the one who accepts me as his friend is greatly superior to me, it is evident that I must grow into ability and appreciation of his order of things before he can either treat me as a friend, or I myself be equal to the duties of one. The higher the duties imposed on a friend, the more unselfish he must be, and the more at liberty to give himself to these duties. For the duties are not a tax, but the pleasing activities of friendship. No one can, then, be called by Christ "my friend" unless he has

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first been *befriended by* Christ; unless he has been so entirely relieved and comforted in his own heart that he now finds it his duty and happiness to devote himself to the one who has afforded to his soul boundless rest and peace. If I know the rest and blessedness which He unfolds to the soul believing on Him and walking in His ways, I cannot but live Him. I elect to live what I enjoy. I must first enjoy Christ as my life before I shall in any degree bear witness of Him. Very often earnest souls begin the other way: they try to bear witness of Him in order that they may enjoy Him; but while the effort is to enjoy Him, there must be a seeking one's own things. One's own spiritual enjoyment is before the mind and thoughts, and this circumscribes one to the limits of oneself, instead of imparting the ability to enter into the extent and fulness of Christ's heart and purposes. The things of Christ may occupy me, and yet the thought uppermost in my mind may be my own enjoyment in Christ; and though with this state there may be a

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good deal of interesting devotedness and zeal, yet the *object* is not Christ. Contrast this state with that of one who, enjoying Christ, knowing Him as the only resource for the heart, occupies himself with every interest and concern of Christ here. All his gain and all he enjoys, is in Christ, who is absent. Hence he links himself with every interest of His in this scene through which he is passing. The joy of his heart is to be a witness in it of Him who is the rest of His own heart, outside and apart from it. If the absent Christ is the rest, and strength, and comfort of my heart above and beyond everything in this world, surely the only suited and natural place for me (my heart claims it of me as His love requires it) is that I should be here for Him—His interests my interest. If I live with Him outside of the scene, it is necessary and incumbent on me to live for Him while passing through it. John xiv. unfolds to me how Christ absent is the strength and comfort of my heart. Faith and love each reach a

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consummation satisfying to the heart in that wondrous chapter. Here is opened out to me my present blessedness in Him. When I know Him thus—every element of comfort and strength being supplied; my soul, by the Spirit, being the abode of the Father—I have nothing to seek. I know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. I am filled with all the fulness of God. If I have nothing to seek for myself, and if Christ is the resource and strength of my heart, surely nothing can interest me here but His things. *Then* I truly take my place in John xv.: this chapter is then my external history, as xiv. is my internal. I am here for Christ, for my heart rests in Him; and as walking here for Him, according to His commandments, He calls me not servant but friend. It is a special favour connected with testimony. The one great distinct mark of Christ's confidence in a soul, is the communication to it of His mind. It is one only known to the witness. In John xiv. He is *my* friend; He satisfies my heart in the fulness of

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His love and power: but as here for Him He calls me *His* friend, He communicates His mind to me, I am made to know what my Lord doeth, which a servant does not know.

Many a one knows something of rest and comfort in Christ, to whom He does not communicate His mind. A father loves all his children: each shares his bounty; but he does not confide his mind and affairs to each. He does so only as He thinks there is interest, and capacity, in any of them, to enter into and help in them. Christ's love for the weakest lamb is often more tenderly expressed than for those more grown; yet He does not communicate His mind, or treat as His friend, any who are not occupied with His interests here: and that, according to His commandments. It is very simple. He loves and cherishes all His people; but He does not treat as a friend by communicating His mind, any one who is not truly, and according to His mind, in the place of testimony for Him here. It is one thing to be cheered and comforted by Him, and

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quite another to be told by Him what He is doing. To be cheered by Him is wonderful and necessary; but what can be a greater favour, than to be informed of His mind, in a scene where everything is against Him. God says of Abraham, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?" A friend will serve me to the utmost; but the one who makes *me his* friend; who confides in me; entrusts himself to me; so that the knowledge of his love for me increases, as I grow into his purpose and ways. To the true witness, He so makes known His mind, that His way is clearly declared. However great the confusion, and the labyrinth here, He gives the clue, the thread by which His witness can fully extricate himself according to His mind, from every difficulty, and know surely that it is His mind. But no one obtains the thread but the one who is truly *for* Him here. And hence, so many have a certain rest in Christ, and a knowledge of His love, who neither know His mind, nor have power to impart it.

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The Lord in His mercy lead us into that devoted testimony where He may call us friends, and furnish us with this priceless thread,—the knowledge of His own mind.

CAN A WITNESS OF CHRIST BE
WORLDLY?

WE must consider what is involved in the word “witness of Christ” before we can definitely answer the question—Can a witness of Christ be worldly? and also we must get a clear idea of what worldliness is. It is plain enough that a witness should set forth clearly the One of whom he testifies, or his testimony is a failure. Certainly he cannot have any other aim; he can accept no lower standard. The Holy Ghost is the witness of Christ, and in His testimony there is no failure. And our Lord, after saying, “He shall testify of me,” adds, “And *ye also* shall bear witness.” The Holy Ghost is here to testify of the absent Christ, and every one led by the Holy Ghost is, as far as he is led by Him, a witness of Christ.

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Surely it is plain such a witness cannot be worldly; and if I be asked what "worldly" means, I reply, All that is not of the Father. To be in any measure a witness of Christ, I must faithfully represent Him in everything. Wherein I fail, I so far fail in being a witness. The strength and leading of the Holy Ghost is to make me a true witness; and as I walk in the Spirit I am one. My standard is Christ. I represent Him as I walk in the Spirit, who is on earth to testify of Him. I am His witness in the power of His life. I am for God, above the influences of an evil world, and I speak and act as He directs me.

The first great question to settle is, What is my testimony? I answer, *Christ*. And then it is evident that as I, in the power of the Spirit, represent Christ, I bear witness of Him. He is the standard, therefore I do not ask, *May* I do so-and-so? may I hold this or that position? but Does the Holy Ghost use such a position for testimony to Christ? Some positions He can and

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does use for this; for instance, that of a parent, a husband, or a master. Nothing can be plainer than that I am a witness of Christ only as I set Him forth; and that to fail in representing Him is to fail in being His witness. It is no question of how much of the world I may hold and still be saved; or how much of it I may retain and be a preacher; but the question is, What constitutes me a witness? and the answer to it is, as the word imports, that I represent Him. If I want to see Christ on earth, I ought to see Him in His witness. But if one were to try to form an idea of Christ now from those who *assume* to be His witnesses, one must be driven to imagine that Christ loved the world and relished the honour and glory of it! Alas! what a testimony we give of Him! To be what He would be were He here; not only as He was, but as He is; this, and nothing short of this, is what I am called to, as His witness, and what it is the Holy Ghost's office to maintain me in; and so far as I miss this, I lose the

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idea of a witness. A man may preach the gospel very earnestly, but though he bear witness to the grace of God, he is not himself a witness, unless he presents Christ in himself, in that moral power in which Christ would be were He here. A man living in, and honoured by, the world, may preach the gospel for souls, and that feelingly; but he is not a witness, unless it can be proved that Christ would live in the world and be honoured by it! I am not now referring to a man's business or support: he must have some means of subsistence, and often God gives more, but as a gift to be used for Him and not for self. But what I press is, that in the most zealous preaching, though there be testimony to the grace and value of the gospel, there is no testimony to Christ, unless it be accompanied with power in the Spirit, which places outside of flesh; and if outside of flesh, it must be outside of earthly position, for in earthly position I am in the flesh and not in the Spirit; and if I can retain earthly position, and still testify of Christ, then Christ is reigning on the earth and is

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not rejected from it; and hence the Holy Ghost is not His witness, for He is not the absent, rejected one! If He be, He can have *nothing to say to high position* in an earthly way. How *could* He? So that if I seek or maintain high position, I am not His witness. I may be a true saint or a zealous preacher, but in all honesty let me admit that I am not a witness. I am not walking in the Spirit: I am but a "babe;" that is to say, carnal, not spiritual. (1 Cor. iii. 1.) I like and value the things which suit and aggrandize men. It is vain for me to plead for my course by referring to Daniel or to others who lived before Christ's death, as is often done. It is that great fact—the death of Christ—which makes all the difference, for it was as rejected from the earth that He took the place of separation from it. His witnesses now are not to be merely witnesses of any given truth. Daniel *was* a faithful witness of the truth in his day. Christ had not come. Christ had not been rejected, and the witness necessarily takes his type according to the nature of the testimony committed to

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him. Surely testimony to Christ absent, testified of here by the Holy Ghost, is very different from the testimony committed to Daniel.

In a word, I maintain for Christ in everything and avoid all that which would minister consequence or recognition to the flesh, and hence I am outside and against the world, and not in any degree of it.

“THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE.”

Far beyond the storm and tempest—
That untroubled calm above—
There the Son of God abideth,
Resting in the Father's love.

Loved with love beyond all measure,
Love that knows no check nor shade;
Loved before the worlds were founded,
Loved before the heavens were made.

Loved with all the love that dwelleth
In the very heart of God;
Loved with all the love befitting
Him in whom all grace abode.

Loved with all the love He claimeth,
Who endured the cross and shame,

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The forsaking of His Father,
To exalt the Father's name.

There in that unmingled gladness,
That unmeasured endless peace,
He abideth and rejoiceth
With a joy that cannot cease.

And amidst that joy and glory,
In that peace no tongue can tell,
Far above the storm and tempest,
There on high with Him we dwell.

All that precious love our portion,
Sharing all alike with Him;
All our thirst for ever quenching
In that everlasting stream.

Ever in the Father's bosom,
There for ever, come what may;
For the love that sought and found us,
Keepeth us by night and day.

Precious to that tender Father,
Precious to that gracious Son;
Precious to that Holy Spirit,
By whom He and we are one.

Unto this His life has brought us,
Nothing less than this He gives;
This the secret joy and power
Of the heart wherein He lives.

Let us praise that love for ever,
Fall in worship at His feet;
Lost in silent joy and wonder,
Sinners made in Him complete.

1867.

“THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN.”

“SEE that ye refuse not him that speaketh,” must always prove a searching word to the anointed ear and the awakened conscience; and those will be the most regardful of the speaker’s authority who have yielded most to His title and claims upon them; to such it will be more a matter of living affection, answering to the “constraining love of Christ,” than of duty and behaviour. God, in *power*, will sustain the heart of a believer which thus responds to *Him* that speaks. True, the message will be heard and accepted, as a sharp two-edged sword, and will do its work where knife-work is in question; but when the pulsations of life are vigorous, and the moral tone of the soul quick and responsive to the speaker, in the deeper enjoyment of what *He is* to the heart, the right hand of support or the bosom of shelter is offered as the resource to such an one, even because of what the lips of the speaker have uttered.

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Take another state of soul, and, alas ! a very different one, where *the message* will be the thing pre-eminent between itself and God, as suited and felt to be needed in its discovered condition; in such a case conscience will be awakened and sharpened to the fineness wanted; power will also introduce itself here, but it will be "the power of God" that clothes the message with divine authority, and not the arm of strength offered to the instructed and obedient one, and on which he is to lean, and, if needs be, to press. The God who speaks and says, "See that ye refuse not," clothed His word with authority by shaking "the earth" when He spoke on earth, and will now give sanction to His word by shaking "the heavens" when He is speaking from heaven. How different are these operations from without; and how different these experiences from within! In one case, conscience, uneasy by the message, exposes to the power that shakes; in the other case, the very same message passes through the conscience only to bid the heart *take hold*

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of the power, that it may be in peace with Him who shakes.

The God who once shook the earth in the days of Moses, and who will yet “once more” shake the heavens and the earth, in the coming day of the Lord’s vengeance, will bid us learn this same power in a yet further character than shaking; and, if needs be, He will make it known and clothe it as “*a consuming fire*,” for “our God” is *this* too. Perhaps one of the most flagrant proofs of the apostasy of the Church is her inability to hold (any more than the nation of Israel in a former dispensation) the grace of God and the righteousness of God together; or if we take one example from the previous typical forms of teaching—the blood of the victim with the fire that consumed it. Let Moses be away with Jehovah preparing the two tables of law, to establish the holiness of God, and the people will take advantage of Aaron and priesthood to erect a golden calf, and set up a false worship of their own. What a voice for to-day! Separate these two, and an

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apostle will say to us, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Individual faith and personal communion with God will be enfeebled in the measure in which the work of Christ *for us*, in its prevalence and perfectness, is separated from the Spirit of God *in us*. Moses broke the two tables over the scene of the golden calf with Aaron and the people long ago, and the children of Levi with their swords were, in figure, the "consuming fire" of those times. In the commonest language of a corrupted age, what do Antinomianism and Arminianism mean but the same deed of separation, thus becoming the rallying terms for what is low enough to rank itself under them?

Neither the establishment of the principles we are considering, nor their illustration, can be confined to the earlier ways of God in government with His ancient people as their Jehovah under Moses and Aaron. Later revelations have unfolded the mystery of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and our relations and responsibilities must

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flow together, according to these heights and depths. The revelation now made to the Church is brought out and published by its suited ministries, so that the ministry by the Son, when He was on earth, declared the Father; and the ministry of the Holy Ghost *now*, since Pentecost, glorifies the Son; nor must we ever separate from these respective ministrations the great fact that the same “God, who spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*.” See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh—by whatever ministries and ministers God may adopt—it is God who speaks to us, and it is by His Son.

Moreover “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;” and how perfectly each was unfolded in His intercourse with a Nicodemus, or a Samaritan sinner at the well, is the business of the Holy Ghost to record. The law given by Moses, and all that maintained that economy, have given place to the “grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ,” and

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these were in due time substantiated and made good eternally between God and the redeemed at the cross, and by the death of Christ. "Grace and truth" are become the right and left hand pillars of this present dispensation, the Jachin (he shall establish) and the Boaz (in it is strength); nor must these be separated in our testimony to the world any more than in our intercourse with the Father under the ministry of the Son or of the Holy Ghost.

Further and minuter examinations of the ways and intercourse between Christ and His disciples will establish their necessary connection, as the water and the basin and the towel in the hands of Jesus testify when He girds Himself and passes on to Peter's feet to wash them. What grace on the part of Christ, and what a truth conveyed to the disciples! Again, in the same chapter, we shall find John lying on Jesus' breast and asking "Who is it?" on the matter of his Lord's betrayal. Nor should these parts of the same ministry be severed, lest the activities

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of a love bent upon serving us be refused, like Peter, when the hand and the eye were caring for the feet, or separated from the repose of conscious love with a John as he lays his head on the bosom of unbroken rest and peace.

Satan and his sieve will be always ready and near, but "*I have prayed for thee,*" shews One who is still nearer to us, and who, upon the prevalence of His own intercession, will turn all to profit and strength for the "brethren." Inward affections and outward ways may be separated from Christ in a Peter, and the Lord's eye turned on the erring disciple may tell him another tale than the towel and the basin; yea, Peter may go out from the presence of His rejected Lord and weep bitterly, but the Shepherd will restore this sheep, and in the deeper consciousness of grace and truth, learned in connection with His own ways, teach him fresh qualifications for feeding the "lambs." A John too will have to learn in the apocalyptic visions, how to connect the head on the breast with another and very different revela-

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tion of his Lord—when it will be as befitting to “fall at his feet as dead,” as it would have been out of season at any previous time.

And why is this? The same Jesus who by His cross brought mercy and truth together, so that “righteousness and peace should kiss each other” as regards the sinner and God, upon matters of forgiveness and salvation, will in other relations, as “walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” be known with feet, as if they burned in a furnace; and in yet future times of judgment to the world, clothe Himself with a “vesture dipped in blood,” and “tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

Does the Church of God, do we, know how to combine these apparent contradictions, and hold them all together, as necessary in our knowledge of God, and of Christ?

In creation a creature's responsibilities are equal to the creature's endowments—besides which the Creator will protect that which He has created, in the

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relation in which it stands to Himself, and the place in which He has set it. All this may be put to the test and tempted, by an antagonistic power, if such an adversary is suffered to act in the sphere of creation, against God; and this, and its consequences, are what have become a matter of fact in the garden of Eden, and of a six thousand years' history. Righteousness and holiness necessarily step in upon transgression by Adam, for God must display Himself *now* according to *sin*; hence judgment finds a place and a call for its exercise.

Whatever God may subsequently introduce in a system of government founded upon these new claims and necessities between Himself and His creatures, will be found to mix itself up with these altered relations, and even form fresh responsibilities. For instance, “as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.” So if the strong hand displays itself on behalf of

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Israel in its deliverance out of Egypt, that same strong hand will be their instructor in the wilderness journey; and not one shall enter Canaan, though they sang the song of victory at the Red Sea!

So again, if the grace of God comes in and puts us now into new relationships with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and secures all these for us in the heavens, our new responsibilities are equal to our new endowments. The ministry of the Holy Ghost by the apostles will unlock these treasures of a Father's love connected with the risen and glorified Son of man, Lord and Head of His body the Church; a Peter, though instructed in the former ways of God by promise and by prophecy, may be unable till after the ascension of his Lord, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, to put together "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;" but this same Peter afterwards has no other way of reaching the glory, and how firmly he binds these two together, we well know who are taught by him in his two epistles. A

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Paul called out and taken up to the third heavens to learn by "visions and revelations of the Lord," for the making known of mysteries, and of things hitherto kept secret, may come down with "a thorn in the flesh," and encourage the Philippians to cultivate the "mind of Christ" in all the grace of His humiliation; or, with the Corinthians, to lead them on into fellowship with Christ's sufferings, in order to know the abundance of His consolations, and a "God of all comfort." A John may have his soul occupied with "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us," and will seek that with us it should be kept in the element of its own love and held in the purity of its own light, disentangled from all that is not of the Father, but of the world.

Individually we shall be taught the lesson, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit;" and again, not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption." If we pass beyond our

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individual relations and responsibilities, and learn our collective and corporate ones, as "baptized by one Spirit into one body, and made to drink into one Spirit," it will be to discover that the nearer God brings us to Himself, the greater must be the distance maintained between us and what He hates. Our new consistency must be with Himself. "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" and again, inside the veil as a worshipper, must be "outside the camp" with Jesus—"Sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom ye shine," &c.

Passing on to the last and most searching scrutiny to which the Church of God is subjected in the opening chapters of the Revelation, under *what* inspection could such a gathered company be placed but under His who "loved the church and gave himself for it?" In the poetic language of the Canticles, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves, by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set," for it is the season of His own most perfect love;

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but when He leaves His garden, and the spices, and the myrrh, and the honey, and the wine, and is seen “walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” upon another errand and purpose, how changed will He appear! Will the Church refuse to know and own Him as “the Son of man,” with the garment and the girdle? Will she not discern (though in another character) the same head, and hair, and eyes which had long ago been celebrated in song, though those eyes are *now* as a flame of fire, upon this visit of inquiry and inspection? Will the Bride of the Lamb turn away from the feet, and the voice, and the right hand, and the mouth, though “a sharp two-edged sword” goes out of it, and though “His countenance is as the sun shining in his strength?” Or will the Church of God learn, by the Canticles and by the Revelation, how to hold these two things together—the *grace* that has made her *what* she is, and the righteousness which must have her *as He is*?

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Shall we not rather go over our earlier lessons of the head on the breast, and the towel for the feet? Again, rather let us recall this beloved disciple, and let him teach us, that to fall at the Lord's feet "as dead" is as perfect when the eyes are *fire* as it was aforetime to repose on "the bosom" of love without the thought of taking a liberty! And why must relations like these, so apparently at variance with each other, be held as "next of kin" by our souls? Why, but for the reason that there can be no compromise between God and ourselves, nor between Christ as Lord and what is gathered out of the world, under the responsibility of His name?

The resources of the heavens had exhausted themselves upon this earth—"last of all God had sent forth his Son"—redemption by the blood of Christ, has vindicated God's righteous judgment in death; resurrection in life has become the title of the Son of man to all power, at the right hand of God. Are the commonest laws of nature to stand good around us, and condemn us?

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“for the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, *receiveth blessing from God* ;” and shall the plants of His own right hand planting, the new creatures in Christ, the new creations by the quickening Spirit, the new habitation of God, *not respond* to Him who owns it and occupies it? Are there golden candlesticks on the earth, and is there no one to walk in their midst to hold the golden snuffers and to trim the lights? Nothing in a dispensation where redemption is the new footing, and resurrection the new life, and the descended Spirit the new power—*nothing* that answers to God and receives blessing from God? Bring forward a group of seven churches locally planted in the earth, and see the same One who washed the disciples’ feet, and who sanctifies and “cleanses the church by the washing of water by the word,” walking in the midst of these seven candlesticks, will they not trust themselves to loving but righteous inspection like His? and

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what will He say to each? This constitutes Revelation ii., iii., and is the business of the disciple whom Jesus loved, as he delivers his message to the angel of each of the seven churches.

Endowments such as never were, and responsibilities such as never will be again, are brought together; and in which we all by grace take our places and part; these are the matters in question! The witness upon earth is not representing fitly her Head and Lord in heaven; the chaste virgin espoused unto Christ is being beguiled, like the serpent deceived Eve. The dial, which is of value by the shadow which it gives, is not true to the sun which bestows the light. "The revelation of Jesus Christ which *God* gave unto him" is the consequence, and He who when upon earth justified Himself by saying, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," when He made the scourge of small cords, will now say (though not till counselling love and recovering grace have done their utmost) "so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither

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cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

What room for deep searchings of heart and deeper exercises of soul are here! fall at His feet, and “as dead,” we must and ought: it is our relief—“put his right hand upon us” He will and must: it is our resource. Faithful to Himself, He will add “fear not,” and proclaim Himself in His newly-gained titles by resurrection life and ascension glory: “I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death.” Precious Jesus! Lord, what a shelter and encouragement are thy bosom at one time in the depths of our communion with thee, and thy right hand at another time, in our services for and with thee! How could John, any more than an Isaiah, have gone upon his errand, except this “live coal” had touched his lips? The seraphim and the tongs “in the year that king Uzziah died,” were sufficient; but the Son of man and the living voice and the hand must do their

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part for John, and did, and will for us, who are of to-day, and in this confidence we will rest, and learn and lean on the sufficiency of His grace !

GROWTH IN THE KNOWLEDGE
OF CHRIST.

How do we grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? There is nothing so grateful to a being as to grow in its own proper existence. The first thing of all importance for a Christian to be assured of is that he has a new existence. Christ is his life: he is not only a pardoned sinner, delivered from all the consequences of sin, &c., but he has a new life, and the life is Christ. Hence the more he increases in the knowledge of Christ, the more he advances in that existence in which he really is.

We are at first solely occupied with what Christ did for us: it could not be otherwise with lost sinners, but when I

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get on a little, and find what the grace of God has been to me, in quickening me together with Christ, I begin to discover another interest and value in Christ. I do not lose my interest and value in Him as my Saviour, as I learn and know that He is my life. On the contrary, when I get to know and feel that He, my Saviour, who saved me from my lost estate, is my life, it imparts an inconceivable, unspeakable interest in Him: for then I know that I no longer live, but that Christ liveth in me. The knowledge of life, and *such* a life, is a wonderful thing. I am not only saved from death *through* Him, but I live *by* Him. He is my life, and *what* a life! the eternal life that was with the Father. I repeat, it invests Christ with the deepest, most intense interest to me, when I advance to this truth. "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." When I know that God's Son is revealed in me, and that, because He lives, I live also; then everything about Him must have an unparalleled interest to me. I lose my

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old personality, and it is not only that His life is mine, but it is not I, but Christ liveth in me. *My very life!* O! how little we know of it. But however little it may be, there is a way given us, in the word, whereby we may grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In 2 Peter i. we are told, "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." In a word, the activities of the divine life must be kept up, or there will be no growth in Him in whom we live. Just inasmuch as the natural life is invigorated by exercise, so is the new life. The activities absorb and command our being; they carry us in the true divine line, and away and apart from all that is not in keeping with it.

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No one was ever overcome who was walking in the activities of life. When we are overcome, it is beyond all doubt that we have lacked these activities *first*, and then have become muddy and shortsighted. Was not Samson tampering with the world before he was overcome? Was not Barnabas temporizing with Peter before he lost that clearness of vision which characterized Paul, and which *he* too would have had if the activities of life had not been lacking in him? There is no way to escape the evil in and around us but by maintaining the activities of the new life. If you sleep in frost you are lost. Support animation, and you are preserved; and not only this, but you will be "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." You will have the glow and animation of His wondrous life; you will be invigorated and delighted by your enlarged acquisition; your calling and election made sure, and "an entrance ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

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Christ." The activities (seven in number, to be added to faith) *must* be all kept up, or the true strength of Christ will not be maintained. If you are walking in these activities, you are prepared for any exigence: you are ready for action at any moment. It is because we are not in them that we so often find ourselves unprepared, and surprised by the most trivial matters of life. The flesh creeps in when there is any stoppage to the activities which the Spirit of God would promote in us.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

FAITH AND PROVIDENCE.

FAITH is resting on the known mind of God, which He has communicated, assured that whatever be the difficulties in the way of its fulfilment, or however great the opposition, it will ultimately be established. Faith in its very nature has to do with that which is not seen: it must rise above the visible and count on things that are not as though they

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were. If everything here were of God, and all in full uninterrupted righteousness, there would be no need to rise from the visible, in order to rest only on the invisible. But the contrary is the fact. Everything has been diverted from its divine place, and the more this anarchy has prevailed, the more faith has become the true and only principle of action for the man of God. Yet God has not deserted the earth. He rules and keeps it in check, and this is His providence; but this is evidently a different thing from faith. Faith knows His mind at any given time, as He is pleased to reveal it, and rests on it, assured that it will be accomplished in spite of all the opposition and misrule which surround us. Faith rests on the mind and will of God and not on the way in which He in His wisdom stems and controls the elements of disorder on earth. Faith rises to His will as a link in the chain of His purposes, a chain in which is neither bend nor break, and where every thought of His heart is maintained and in harmony. It

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soars into the undisturbed region of His blessed, unalterable will, and bides its time here, assured that it has the key of the position, and that in due time all will open out, and be as it has been intimated.

The moment man fell, and another rule besides God's, and irrespective of God's, obtained a place, God must either altogether suppress man, now acting for himself, and supported by Satan; or (while suffering this evil rule, to a certain extent, to exist), He, as the only source of power, must check and control it as His wisdom and ultimate purposes require. God never gives up His supreme power; but it is plain to any thoughtful person that if man has, under the counsel of Satan, adopted another rule and line of action besides God's, God must either remove His disobedient creature from off the earth, or He must check and control his adverse intentions and ways. The latter is what God has done; and every intervention of His power here on earth is His providence. Such interventions are to

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check and limit the rule of selfwill which has sprung up against Him; and faith of course recognizes them as of God, for the purpose intended by Him; but faith itself rests in God, in quite another region and on quite another ground, beside that of intervention put forth to check the progress of evil and self-will. The simple issue raised is this: Am I to live by faith, resting in God's word, above all the evil and opposition here? or am I to be dependent on His providences only for a knowledge of His will and of my walk through the world, according to it? Nothing can be plainer than that faith, as I have attempted to represent it, is a far higher and more restful path, as also the only true and safe one; for it views God's mind in a region where nothing checks or interferes with it—sees Him as He is in Himself, and there rests on Him: whereas in providence I only follow Him in His way of limiting and controlling the misrule and disorder here, in order ultimately to bring about His own purposes. Again, faith is always intelligent

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and assured; but often the providences of God are mysterious and unaccountable.

Abram, the father of the faithful, is called to walk by faith, to go out, not knowing whither he went, and into the land of Canaan he came. By providence, there is a famine in the land, and he goes down into Egypt. Occupied with the providence, he slips from faith. The famine was permitted of God; why, we know not, or need not enquire; but it was a providence, and Abram in following it turned aside from the path of faith in which he had hitherto walked; and I need not add, that his doing so was attended with sad and painful consequences. God's word to Abram had been to dwell in Canaan, and while he walked in faith he adhered to this word; but when "the famine was grievous in the land," he declined from faith and regarded the famine as an indication to him to go where there was plenty; and here was his mistake and failure, because in doing so he surrendered faith, which has to do with nothing but God's word. It is not that I am to despise

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or disregard the providence; but I am not to surrender faith and adopt the providence instead. If I am walking in faith, and persistent in the path of faith, the providences will eventually suit and confirm me; not by carrying me outside faith (which, if I make them my guide they must do), but by proving that the God whom I rest in, and whose word I follow, is the same God who checks and controls the evil here by His providential hand. A "ram caught in the thicket by his horns" (Gen. xxvii. 13), is a providence for Abram, *when faith had previously risen above all providences*. The man of faith can turn providences to account, whether they be apparently for him or against. At Ziklag (1 Sam. xxx.) all the providences are against David; but "he encourages himself in the Lord his God." If he had rested only in providences at that crisis, he must have succumbed, and that too at a juncture and a moment when he was within a step of the kingdom, for Saul was then being slain on the mountains of Gilboa.

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The providences (Matt. xiv.) were against Peter when leaving the ship to join Christ on the waters. Was he to hearken to the "come" of Christ, or to be swayed by the winds and waves? They were providences and tested his faith; and in so far as he had faith, he found they were not really adverse to him, but that they contributed to fix his eyes more absolutely on Christ; but when the providences engaged him, he had no power to overcome them, he began to sink!

Paul, in Acts xxvii., resisted every influence which could move or reach a man, in order to shake his faith in God. Providence, too, was at first against him, for "the south wind blew softly," thus confirming the master of the ship in his rejection of Paul's counsel (Acts xxvii. 10—13), but this in no wise altered Paul's conviction. And why? Because he had acquired it from faith in God. *Afterwards* providences justify his faith. "Not long after," we read (ver. 14), "there arose a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon." Providences will confirm

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and justify faith; but *lead to faith they never will*. Faith can use them and unravel them, and see oftentimes their object and use; but faith is wholly above and independent of them, though free to use and accept them, as they fall in with that which it enjoins. When I am walking with God (for that is faith), “enduring, as seeing him who is invisible,” I move on, though all circumstances be against me; and as I rise above them, I reach the providence which suits me, I am in the line of God’s government, above all others. When Moses leaves Egypt (Exod. ii. 15; Heb. xi. 27) he appeared to be flying in the face of providence; but at the well of Midian he finds, in answer to his own grace and service, a door of relief and mercy which he can accept, provided for himself. How different it would have been if he had waited to leave Egypt until he had a guarantee of Reuel’s reception in the land of Midian! Where then would have been his faith in the Invisible? God provides suitably to His own will and heart, for the one walking with

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and for Him, through a world of evil and misrule; but He *Himself* is the Guide for such an one, and not His providence. Hence all the providences for Moses in Midian must be put aside, and have no claim on him when God calls him to re-enter the path of faith and service.

The breaks in the path of faith are never counted to us in God's sight. Our journey is one of faith, and wherever we stop, or however long may be the interval, there exactly even as if we had slept on the road, we recommence our journey. This principle may be confirmed throughout scripture, in the history of God's people, whether individually or nationally. Abram after his sojourn in Egypt returns to "the place where his tent had been at the *beginning* unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first." With regard to Israel as a people, we find the same principle adhered to; but I need not multiply examples. I repeat, what I have to do is to act in faith in God, relying on His

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word, and in spite of all providences; and then, while pursuing the path of faith, I use the providences as they are suitable; not as guides to faith, but as means to carry out the works of faith; and faith, as I have said, is intelligent and explicable, and will know what are providences, and as such, usable, and what are not. David, in facing Goliath, chooses five smooth stones from the brook, and puts them in his shepherd's bag. These were the means which providence had placed in his hand; those which naturally came within the range of his calling; and this is a providence—what God in a natural way gives me a right to. Saul's armour might have appeared to be a providence, but to the man of faith it was not so, and he rejects it. We must make a distinction between what man does and what God does. All that is termed providence is not so; while much which by the unthoughtful is called chance, is by the enlightened seen to be providence; but the tendency is, to substitute it for faith; and the

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man who gets outside faith in walk, necessarily, if he keeps up any link with God, has to turn to providences. If I am waiting on providence, I am like a ship (without helm or compass) on the surface of the ocean, driven about at the sport of wind and tide, thinking myself very fortunate if I get into a safe port; whereas, if I walk by faith, I am superior to the wind and tide, though I use either or both, when they come in the direction in which I steer. As to that, I have no uncertainty: there are no doubts in the voyage of faith. God's providences, like the trade winds to the vessel, may come in to support and aid me, but they never generate or beget faith.

In a word, if I walk simply with God, I do whatever He, by His Spirit and word, tells me to do; not guided by what I see, or even by what I am given; but turning to account everything which I am given by His providence, in that path in which "I look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," even that of faith.

THE LORD "IN THE MIDST."

IN TWO ASPECTS.

IN Matthew xviii. 20 the Lord Jesus tells His disciples that the manner in which power would now be vouchsafed to God's people, would be quite different from that under the Mosaic Economy of the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate of the High Priest. Now, it would be "where two or three gather together to my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) This is a fundamental principle at the very infancy of the Church, surviving all declension and failure. There is one simple condition demanded; namely, that two or three should be gathered to Christ's name; and consequent on this, He would be in their midst. Surely the disciples understood something of the nature of the blessing which His presence conferred. They of course did not understand the fulness of this great favour, but it was sufficient to cheer and support their hearts at the time, and this assurance of our Lord, has been in

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every age of the Church, the resource and strength of the true hearted; and the more evil and difficult the day, the more so. What He is in our midst, when He thus manifests Himself, none can fully apprehend, much less explain.

The effect and blessing of His personal presence, revealed by the Holy Ghost, surpasses every conceivable thing, and imparts to the heart a sense of His love and interest, which, the more it is known, the more it is appreciated. It is the aspect in which He delights to be known; "for no man ever hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as the Lord the Church." He "loved the Church and gave himself for it;" "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The great theme of Paul's ministry was the aspect of Christ as He is, and for the Church, in heart and purpose, for thus is He, in the midst of those gathered to His name. From the moment Christ revealed Himself to him, as "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," to the end of his course, the

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great subject of his teaching was, what Christ is to the saints on earth, and his unceasing labours were to present every man grown up in Christ Jesus. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul, by the Spirit, unfolds to us what Christ is to the Church, and what the Church is to Him. He, the Head of the Church which is His body, and we quickened with Him, raised up together with Him, and made to sit together with Him, in heavenly places in Him. (Ephesians ii.) Again (chap. iii.), He dwelling in our hearts by faith, that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God; so that we may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase

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of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love. Such is the aspect in which Paul presented Christ: we with Him in heaven, in His life through the Spirit; He dwelling in the heart by faith; making known to it His love which passeth knowledge; and thus extending out into all the fulness of God. He the Head, supplying to each grace from Himself, which would edify the body; which growing up to Him, and true to itself, would edify itself in love. Can any one grasp or comprehend the deep, varied, and wondrous purpose of the heart of Christ, as it was communicated to Paul? How he was entranced and sustained, as his soul dwelt on the heart of Christ for His body, the Church! How this blessed revelation of the heart of Christ in heaven filled his soul and qualified him for his service here for Christ, disclosing to him the depth and fulness of that which was spoken by our Lord Himself in John xiii.—xvii., as how His loved ones should know Him on earth. To Paul He is revealed according to the fulness of His heart,

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(See Eph.) as He is He loves to be known by the Church, in the midst of them gathered to His name. To John is committed how He loved His own unto the end, and how He would minister to them during His absence. It is easy to recognize the same blessed Person as He is presented to Paul or to John. The place from where He is viewed is the real cause of the difference. To Paul is disclosed His heart in all the deep lines of His love and purpose, apart from, and above any check or anything to limit or circumscribe it, for He is in heaven. To John is disclosed the same heart, but as it would be known on earth where everything is hindering and obstructive. It must necessarily be a different thing to see the heart of Christ in heaven, His love in all its eternal lines, where He is far above all principality and power, head over all things to the Church, and to see how that heart would express itself, on earth, in the midst of His people encompassed with trial and opposition. The knowledge of His heart in heaven

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would only have led one more fully to know how it would express itself on earth. Paul's knowledge led him fully into John's knowledge, though John's knowledge could hardly have led him up to Paul's knowledge. To John, so much of the heart of Christ is disclosed as His loved ones required to know down here, in order that they might be here as He, in His love, desired them to be. To Paul, on the contrary, the whole scope and purpose of His heart is revealed, far and away beyond what on earth could ever have been required. All that Christ's love desired from its depths that His loved ones should know of it on earth, is communicated by John. The breadth, and length, depth, and height, of all His purposes respecting the Church, are made known to Paul. Paul might not experimentally have known Him more on earth than John; but he could not certainly have known Him less; if he, through faith, entered into the revelation given to himself. Either way Christ's presence in the midst of His saints, as they knew His

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heart and feeling, was esteemed by both the deepest, fullest blessing which could be conferred on His saints on earth. What could surpass the presence of Christ in the midst of His loved ones, expressing without hindrance or check the love and purpose of His heart for them.

But if nothing could surpass this unique, transcendent moment, so, on the other hand, nothing can be more terrible than to see Him in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks in quite another aspect. (Rev. i. 13—16.) Can we be surprised that John, who knew Him so well in the aspect in which His heart delighted to shew itself, should fall at His feet as dead when he saw Him in the terrible aspect in which these verses present Him? But why is He in the midst of the churches in this terrific, unapproachable aspect? Simply because the Church had slighted His love and had departed from that place of holiness and truth in which He had set it. And even, as it is true, that He would be in the midst of two

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or three gathered to His name, in the aspect His heart delights to shew itself, so also is it now declared, that when He is slighted, or the principles of His government overlooked, or set aside, then He is in the midst, in the most terrific, awe-inspiring aspect. It is easily accounted for. The greater and truer the love, the more it resents indifference to it. Where I have the most claims, where I have expended most, in the love of my heart, there I must, if my love be true, feel most if it be slighted or overlooked. With Christ, whose love is perfect, we can at once see how He must rebuke the Church, when after all the revelations of His love, the Church should systematically act apart from Him and indifferently towards Him. When love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave, and can the blessed Lord see His Church slight and turn away from His love, without rebuke? Does He not know that greater and better love there could not be? How it would distress and exasperate an ordinary

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heart to see a loved child turn away from the care and providings of its love; and if an ordinary heart, with its imperfect love, feels this so intensely, how deeply must our blessed Lord resent the Church's indifference. If even two or three were gathered to His name, He would be in their midst, in the aspect of His love and grace, as His heart delights to be; but when the Church had lost its first love, and corruptions of all kinds were suffered to exist in its circle, He does not abandon it, but He appears in its midst, in a manner and power fitted to rebuke its indifference and apostasy. In this altered and fearful aspect, He is judging and rebuking. He would arouse the conscience of His loved ones to a sense of the Church's retrogression and failure, and He would practically lead the true-hearted to fall at His feet as John, and there to learn how He is the living One out of the dead, our life, and to walk here, in the power of that life dependent on Him which is the only true power of separation from this evil state of

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things. He discloses here His sense of the failure of the Church; the very terribleness of His aspect intimates the extent and depth of His estimate of it. Why should He appear among the candlesticks in such an aspect, if not to denounce the condition of things—to reach the conscience of every living soul, and cause, it in deep searchings of heart, to turn to Him in true separation from all around? In a word, He would affect each of His people as He affected John, and then lead them into the path and course pleasing to Himself. The path and course I shall hope to point out another time, merely pressing now on souls that if they know the Lord in their midst, as gathered to His name, they must have been separated, as dead at His feet, and risen ones in His life through the Spirit, from the present state of the Church on earth, where He cannot be seen or approached without dismay. If souls can continue connected as they are with the disorder of the Church, it only proves that they have not seen Him at all. They have never

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felt near Him, or surely they would be alarmed unto death, at the aspect in which He is in the midst of the churches; and to such souls, mixed up as they are in the disorder and corruption, He could not be seen in any other aspect.

**“RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE
HAVE KISSED EACH OTHER.”**

THE fact that “righteousness and peace have (to use scriptural language) kissed each other” is one of momentous and surpassing interest; and to man, the most wonderful event. It proclaims that righteousness and peace, which hitherto had stood apart, as entirely irreconcilable, are now in the closest terms of amity. Every believer must long to know how this came about. Righteousness and peace were irreconcilable so long as man in unrighteousness existed before God. To put them in happy relation towards one another, the cause of their separation must be

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removed, and this cause is man himself. While he remained as he is by nature, there could be no righteousness, and hence no peace. There cannot be righteousness so long as the man of unrighteousness exists; and there cannot be peace so long as the element of offence exists. Establish one and you establish the other. If righteousness be established, peace is established, for it is that which stands in the way of righteousness, which is also the obstacle to peace. There is nothing to disturb the peace if there be nothing to offend the righteousness; but if the righteousness be offended by unrighteousness, there cannot be peace. If every being were in full accord with righteousness, then every being would be in peace: there would be nothing to disturb the harmony. It is the existence of unrighteousness which causes the breach and gives occasion to the enmity. Hence to bring about the great event of righteousness and peace kissing each other, the cause of the separation, the being of unrighteousness, must be removed.

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Man is that being of unrighteousness. He sinned against God, acted in self-will, and is now under the doom of death because of His sin; so that it is not only the sins which he committed, which must be atoned for, but the creature by whom they were committed must be righteously removed, and one in righteousness set up in his stead, or there will not be righteousness; and if there be not righteousness, there will not be peace. If we do not understand what is required in order to ensure the full satisfaction of righteousness, we cannot understand what has been done to secure it. And again, if we do not apprehend how man is unrighteous and the extent to which unrighteousness attaches to him, we cannot see the extent of the action which righteousness requires, and on the execution of which it is established. It is not only that man does unrighteous things, but that he is an unrighteous being. "There is none righteous; no, not one."

Two things are required to establish righteousness. First, to remove righte-

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ously the unrighteous being; that is judgment; and, secondly, to set up one in full accord with righteousness; that is resurrection. If these points be accomplished, there remains nothing to mar or disturb the peace; nay, so entirely is every element of offence removed, that instead of righteousness and peace standing apart, they are in the closest and happiest relation.

But man being under the penalty of death because of sin (and no less a penalty could a righteous God inflict on an unrighteous creature), there is no ability in him to right himself before God, because his life is under forfeiture, and he himself is unrighteous. Hence, his life must not only be surrendered, but his unrighteous self must be judicially dealt with at the same time, and this plainly cannot be done by himself. The Son of God comes into the world, and, blessed be His name, does both: bears the judgment on man, and rises out of it a new man, the author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him. He bears the sinner's penalty, and hav-

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ing borne it, rises out from among the dead, not to revive the old man who was under judgment, but to inaugurate an entirely new one in Himself, the risen one. Thus in Christ are effected the two things required in order to satisfy righteousness. He, in His cross, bears the judgment on man—the forfeiture of life, and thus righteously was ended the unrighteous being, for in His death the whole race comes to an end before God. Death is the end of the creature existence. Christ alone could bear the judgment righteously. He bears righteously the judgment due to the sinner, but having done so, He rises out of it, and transfers every believing soul into His own life—that life in which He had risen out from among the dead. He puts an end before God to the unrighteous being; for bearing the judgment due to it necessarily ends it, and, therefore, any one in Christ has no longer anything to do in His presence with the unrighteous being. His righteousness no longer encounters such a being; for if I am in Christ, I am out

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of the old man who is judged in His cross, and in Him who has risen out of the judgment. Hence God's righteousness is satisfied, for it encounters nothing against itself, and if there be nothing to offend, there is nothing to provoke any disturbance; but on the contrary, the ground being entirely and fully cleared, and now occupied from God's side by righteousness, righteousness and peace are in one unbroken and happy nearness. If there be any limitation to the removal of everything which offends against righteousness, there cannot be this union between righteousness and peace; there is still an element of disturbance and offence; but if the removal of the offending thing be complete, the righteousness is satisfied, and it coalesces with peace.

The barrier which most stood in the way of our progress is not only that which, when overcome, most signalizes us; but it is to us an entrance into another region, and one which (even as the Red Sea to Israel) is never to be repaired.

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THE SNARE OF A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

WHEN the conscience is in exercise, there is great need that it should not be checked or quieted by partial action, or by imperfect intelligence. The conscience of a saint is awakened by the Spirit of God to seek relief from the presence of evil around. This is a true, healthy purpose, and most blessed and effective when carried out according to the word of God. The danger and consequent loss is when compromise is entered into, when the conscience is quieted by one step, rather than by a definite and clear escape from the place of grievance. And thus, alas! the flesh is spared and the Spirit of God grieved, and there is really no progress. Often this occurs in our christian history; the conscience has been aroused, but to meet it fully as in the light of God's presence, would cost our nature too much. Of course we do not reason in this plain way with ourselves; but do

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we not often, perhaps years afterwards, discover that it was really sparing ourselves, which led to our resisting the demands and strivings of our conscience? for now, being in the place of blessing which long before our conscience had indicated, we see how we had deceived ourselves, and thus had hindered our own blessing; and all because we feared the personal trial to which we should have been exposed in reaching it.

It is well to be warned of this device, or weakness, from which all suffer many times and in many ways; one which I may call an effort to appease the conscience without putting the flesh to much sacrifice, because if we see how we have been deceived in this subtle way, we are the more careful to attend to our conscience, and how God is speaking to it, than how we may quiet it at the smallest cost to ourselves. In short, as a rule, when the conscience is arrested or exercised, the first thought is, not what will at all costs satisfy it according to God; but on the contrary, how can I answer its demand without

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involving myself in loss and pain. If in ordinary cases we are exposed to a temptation of this kind, and too often yield to it, how much more when the most eventful step in our life as a Christian, is the one on which the conscience is exercised. Can any step be more important, or involve consequences of greater magnitude, than the ground I take for Christ here in separating from the organized systems around? Some dupe their consciences with the assertion that the evil in one place is as bad as in another; and hence they say they are not called to separate from any order or form in which they may find themselves. Others again endeavour to see themselves individually unimplicated in the things they disapprove of, because they do not sanction them, though they do not separate from them. Others labour honestly for reform, while they remain where they admit reform is needed. Others separate, and take the ground of meeting with Christians in the name of Christ, and thus quiet their consciences;

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but make no real progress, because they do not reach, or seek to reach, the responsibility laid upon them because of this ground. Separation from what is evil is really never reached by departing from the place of evil; but by reaching the place appointed of God, where the flesh can have no place. Lot pleads for Zoar, no doubt a step in the right direction; but not the place appointed of God, and therefore not the place of strength and blessing. It is of all importance that I should reach God's ground, and not content myself with separating from the place of evil in which I find myself. It is written "Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding." The former is the first right step, but it is not all. If I only do the former, I am only seeking what suits my conscience, and not that which suits God; and therefore I am still in something of man. This is the snare which so many fall into in this day. When a person takes even a right step with the object of getting ease and quietude to himself, to his own conscience it may be, there is reason to

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fear for him; but if he is seeking to reach God's mind, and if the step be taken as leading thereto, there is every reason to be thankful and hopeful on account of him. Every day almost we hear of people who have taken a right step, but who never think of doing more. Lot ought to have left Sodom, but he ought not to have contented himself with Zoar. Jacob ought to have left Laban's house, but he ought not to have contented himself with Shalem. A right step is not enough. God's mind and appointment is the only measure, and Jacob has to be taught to go to Bethel, the house of God; and many a modern Jacob has to learn the same lesson. Paul instructs Timothy not only to depart from evil, but also to follow on in the divine path. It relieves the conscience to retire from the evil; but it requires the light and power of God's Spirit to lead us into what suits God and what is His way for us. The two tribes and a half can plead skilfully for remaining on this side Jordan; but if they had not planted themselves outside the pro-

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mised land, they never would have needed to erect an "Ed," or something to look to. There is no shore more dangerous to really zealous souls than this. Every effort at separation from evil has in most cases ended in some one step, and hence all the sects of dissenters which have arisen. There never was a dissenter yet who had not taken some one right step, and this very step proved a snare to them; for, knowing that they had made a good move, their conscience was quieted, and they were glad not to be called to make any greater sacrifice. The snare lies in this: One is occupied with the thing done, which quiets, because it is a step in the right direction, and thus one is diverted from seeing or enquiring what God calls His saints to. One's own ease is consulted and not God; therefore the measure which affords a lull to the conscience is accepted, instead of that which God enjoins. How many now-a-days avow separation from the world and from Christendom, without seeing or really caring to apprehend the funda-

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mental principle on which the Church has been set up. It is not merely separation from the "great house," but it is also to "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." It is not only loosening and purging myself from everything unfit for God's house; but it is in heart and spirit adopting and maintaining the principles which ever belong to His Church, until He comes. His body is here; His members in unity through the one Spirit; and He in the midst where two or three are gathered to His name; and until the Church be removed, any step short of this truth, if it be considered satisfactory, is a snare: because it deludes the heart, and diverts it from reaching the circle of Christ's heart on earth, and the circle in which, and for which, the Holy Ghost is here. It is a serious question; and it is sad indeed to see many, in the lawless spirit of the age, breaking loose from all church government which is conducted on false principles; but, like well-

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manned vessels at sea, without chart or compass, going hither and thither as they are drifted. They have left the unreliable, but have not been taught of God the true or the reliable. It is not enough that I have done something right, but what I have to do is the *whole will of God*. Nothing less can please Him, or bless my soul.

In fine, if I make my own ease of mind or judgment the measure of my action, instead of the revealed will of God and the leading of the Holy Ghost, the consequence will be, that it will be more difficult for me to be led on than for those who have not moved at all. For at the bottom the hindrance to me is the desire to spare myself the sacrifice; and according as I spare myself I deprive myself, in a hundred-fold proportion, of the blessing contingent on faithfulness; and hence they who rest satisfied with their right step never advance in truth or knowledge beyond a certain point.

But of this more another time if the Lord will.

COMMON MIND WITH THE LORD.

BEFORE I am in communion I am so restful that I can sit at Christ's feet and follow in company with His mind *at the time*. Then no desolation or sorrow here can distract me; for I find in Him a full resource for my heart. I may not quite understand what He is doing, but I understand the rest I find in Him. I begin like the blind man in John ix.: he sees, hears, believes, and worships. He is properly fitted for communion, in the faith that Christ is the "Son of God." (Ver. 35—38.) But there is more than this. There is the knowledge of Himself meeting all our need in a world of sorrow and death, as Mary in John xi. There is first much to get out of nature, before one is simply before Him, as in John ix. 38. There the one to whom He is the light, and who sees light, is shaken out of all old associations, neighbours, Pharisees, parents, and Jews, and then he believes in the "Son of God," and worships Him.

But there is death to be met in this

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scene also; and we must learn Him, as our resource in the darkness of it (John xi.), in order to be so free from self as to be simply in accordance with His mind. Eternal life leads into all this, but practically, nature must first be found to be worthless, before Christ is the object of the heart. This is John ix. And then there is death here, where He walks beside the sorrowing Mary, and fills the blank. Then He is the resource of the heart, which now follows in company with His mind, as Mary in John xii. Eternal life is in light. There is no communion but in eternal life, and in the light. The life is always in light, and when enjoyed is known to be there and nowhere else. There His presence is known and then His *mind*. There is first rest from all nature and bereavement; then the cup is filled, an object is found, the resource known, and then communion or company with His mind follows. Mary Magdalene found all this in Christ, and then in company with His mind, at His bidding, repeating His words, she leaves

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all here and walks in the world, with the unrepaired and irreparable blank, but in the dignity of one going on in company with the mind of her ascended Lord. When the soul is in full rest, I am in the light; but this is not necessarily communion, though many mistake it for communion. Light is my only true ground, and I am there in eternal life; but light is not enough, it repels all opposites, but in it (the light) I find His *presence*, and in His presence I learn His mind. I should know not only the virtues of eternal life, but also its properties, which is fellowship with the Father and the Son. This is the order. First, full rest in the light; secondly, His presence in it; thirdly, His mind as it is. My walk, then, is according to Luke xii. 3, 5. "Your loins girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord;" and this is simply because (see Luke xi. 34,) the "eye is single and the whole body full of light." My candle is fed with light from Him who is the Light.

THE GRACE OF A HEAVENLY MAN.

You seem to have the impression that a being governed by the mind of God, literally what our Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth, must be something unnatural and uninteresting. But is it so? Is there not a beauty and a grace exquisitely adapted in that which is divine, which cannot be equally in any measure in a lower being with a lower mind? Did you ever think that a good deal of what is attractive in the familiar ways of saints derives its attractiveness from the divine mind, and that which we sometimes dislike in one another is the working of an uncorrected self? I believe the more we are used to the habits and ways of one simply governed by the mind of Christ, that instead of being under restraint, and under the sense of its being utopian, the more we should acquire distaste for any other company, and wherever we went, we should seek the high, moral, elevated, tone which lent such a charm to the smallest conventionalities of life. Was it

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not so pre-eminently in our blessed Lord? The true, decided, faithful, affectionate way He walked familiarly with His disciples must have imparted to His society an attractive superiority to any other; but I also believe that in order to be this, it must be exquisitely natural. It is the spurious thing that is unnatural, and when there is an effort to imitate, without any principle of life to produce the action. A perfect man, governed by divine principles, must be an intensely attractive, interesting person. Everything would be done at the right time, and done in the right way, with an evenness and strength which must be most charming. To live the reality of the being I am is the end of creation—in doing so, I answer the end and purpose of the Creator. I am now a new man in Christ Jesus, and, as I live in Him and act according to His Spirit, I must not only be well pleasing to God, enjoying communion with Him, but I must be a man, the truest, the most reliable, because true; most truly intelligent, because I have the mind of

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Christ; the most unselfish, and therefore the most attractive; and once I am fully set to be of this order of existence, i.e., as Christ is, I seek, and value, and grow in the company where His mind and Spirit rule. I contribute to it, and it contributes to me. The mistake is, that we think we can keep up the two; that is, what suits Christ's nature and what suits our own. The first great thing is to learn the superiority in every way of the former. When once we have got hold of the idea that His nature makes us in everything superior, we cultivate it, and discountenance the inferior, because uncongenial to it: and the more we cultivate the one, the more empowered we are to discountenance and stand apart from the other. Children may mistake farthings for sovereigns; but one who knows the latter can easily draw the line of value between them.

Communion is not seeing one doing a thing or hearing how he did it; but being in concert and company with him at the time, so as to know his mind at *the time*.

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LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS.

**FROM the world and its pollution,
Lord, by faith to thee we turn;
Tracing thus, in full solution,
Problems none can else discern.**

**Yes! our tale of sin and sorrow,
Conscious ruin, weakness, loss,
Doth a living lustre borrow,
Read in presence of the cross.**

**E'en the vale of death, Lord Jesus,
Lit throughout its length, doth shine;
Thine the path from doubt that frees us,
Thine its radiance divine.**

**Thou hast passed, a pilgrim stranger,
Through these hostile scenes below;
Want, repulse, temptation, danger,
Thou, in grace, hast deigned to know.**

**Thou hast felt the desolation
We, in measure, prove to-day;
Ours a kindred consolation,
As thy Father we obey.**

**Precious Lord! be thine example
Written in our heart and mind;
As the desert thorns we trample,
Leaving Egypt far behind.**

**Egypt's pillars, proud and hollow,
Broken, lie upon the shore;
We the glory-column follow:
God is with us evermore!**

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FRAGMENTS.

There is a personality, a living reality in the word, which I feel an increasing jealousy not to come short of. Our business is *with God*, and not with statements and propositions only. God can be known only through His word—that is most true. But what we read is to give us *Him*, and He is to be known as the living reality and personality of the word. Unless meditation and communion carry on, under the Spirit, this process, the truth will not reach the soul, or be carried in living, personal power home to its dwelling-place.

What manner of love is this, that, dealing with an individual sinner, like you, has taken up an earthen vessel, and made Christ to take up His abode in it. Exercise of soul never goes beyond its knowledge of Christ.

If one higher than I thoroughly takes me up, He must necessarily put me in a new condition; and as the new condition is known, there is positive separation and deliverance from the inferior one.

Before the death of Christ, faith carried the saint *over* the old things to God. Now, faith properly asserts that the old things have *passed away*, and all things are of God.

PHILADELPHIA,

OR THE TRUE PLACE IN THE TIME OF FAILURE.

EVERY spiritual one will admit that the Church is not now what it was when first set up; nay more, that the Church has not only departed from its first estate, but that, as set forth in the seven churches of Asia (Rev. ii., iii.), it had not only lost its first love, but had fallen into many and grievous corruptions. To John is revealed the state of the Church in failure; Paul sees the evils working in it, and instructs the faithful servant how to combat them, and be superior to them. In Revelation ii., iii. we are told how our blessed Lord views all that is going on; what He approves and what He condemns. This, to the devoted and the spiritual, is very helpful. What can be more assuring and satisfactory than to be warned of the evils to which we are exposed, in order that we may overcome them, and to be informed how our Lord views everything; what He regards favour-

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ably and what He rebukes? If I have truly apprehended Him in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, in the aspect alone worthy of Himself, surely no information or instruction can be more prized by me, than that which details to me what He approves and what He rebukes, because then I am enabled through grace, to adopt the one and avoid the other.

Now it is plain to any careful reader, that the church of Philadelphia is the only one which in all the time of failure escapes censure. It is not that it has returned to the first and high estate of the Church, not at all, but that it has escaped the evils which were working in the Church, and it therefore presents the best estate, in a time of failure. I do not see that we are to expect at such a time, a higher state, than an exemption from the evils in the Church. A Philadelphian state is not a thing of great distinction; a great power able to dictate to others because of its superiority. What we get in it is more the idea of emancipation from evil; or, of

one who had preserved his liberty. The testimony is that of escape, rather than of established might; that of a little power, able to preserve itself from the encroachments of the enemy, rather than a great power, which made others acknowledge its greatness. In a word, Philadelphia was not overwhelmed, when others were; and the difference between it and the rest lay in this, that while they had succumbed it had not. It simply retained superiority to the evils which would have swamped it. It assumed nothing, but that it did not sink. Its strength amounted to this, that it had been able to resist. It did not venture to boast, or to assume any high place; but it simply had survived, safe from the surrounding evil. It had a little strength, and this was not in vain, for it had used it well; it had kept Christ's word, and had not denied His name. There is no true-hearted saint but must be earnest and eager to learn and know what the Lord expects him to do in a time of wide-spread failure. Surely no one with any divine sense

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will deny that the Church has departed grievously from its first estate, as the pillar and ground of truth. If then the failure be admitted, what can be so interesting or important to the disciple as the communication of what the Lord expects him to do at such a time? The Church does not merely seek to avoid certain corruptions, but it uses the "little strength" to rise superior to all the evils, and to retain and maintain pure ground as Christ's witness on earth; feeble as a witness, to be sure, but yet in keeping with His mind and nature. Must we not rejoice, that there is a path distinctly marked out for the Church, where it can be true to the Lord in a time of overflowing failure? That path is traced out for us by the Spirit of God, in Christ's word to the church of Philadelphia; and I am on that path, if I keep His word, and have not denied His name. Could less be required of me? and is it not a fact, that because these two points have been overlooked, the saints have sunk into the failure, in which the Church is?

The Church has not kept Christ's word, and *has* denied His name; and the saints in general have sanctioned it by being connected with an organization which had kept neither His word nor His name. Now I am sure there are many saints who would be horrified to think or hear that they had not professedly kept His word and even had denied His name; and doubtless, in their consciences they feel themselves exonerated from any such charge; but this arises, as I shall hope to shew, from not understanding the import and meaning of keeping His word and not denying His name. Many would argue that they kept the Bible and nothing but the Bible, and that they never pray or preach without using His name. Thus, the true meaning of this eventful passage is frittered away and pared down to suit the state of souls, mixed up with the Church in the world. Of course one could not keep His word without keeping the Bible; but to keep His word is much more than that. No doubt there was a true effort in the Church of Sardis to

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rise out of the corruption of Thyatira; but there was not the grasping and maintaining the counsel and scope of His word which characterized Philadelphia. To keep His word is that "the word of Christ should dwell in us richly." (Col. iii. 16.) It is His counsel: as the Lord says, I have given them thy word. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. Paul says (Col. i.), that I may *fulfil* the word of God. The word is the mind of God uttered. And if this be not kept, there can really be no light or apprehension of the path which the saint of God ought now to observe on earth. I believe it is limiting the word to the canon of scripture, which has led to the deadening of the conscience on this point; for if souls were convinced that they were not keeping the word of Christ, unless they were adhering to His counsel and His mind as fully as He had expressed it, they could not help being stirred up and exercised as to the object and scope of it. They would not deceive themselves with the

idea that maintaining the Bible as a sole *authority*, is tantamount to keeping His word. Of course it is right and necessary that I should maintain the authenticity and sufficiency of the Bible ; but to "keep my word," means more than that. In ordinary language, if I say to a child or servant, You have kept my word, I should not mean thereby that they had merely kept the letter of instructions safely, surely, and without mutilation or interpolation, as the unerring warrant and guarantee of my mind ; but besides, that they had observed and diligently adhered to the tenor and purpose of my *mind*, as disclosed by the words of my letter. It is false, and diverts from the true meaning of the passage to allege that holding the inspiration of the Bible and maintaining it as the only authority for everything relating to God is keeping "my word." It is to assert that what is merely a part is the whole. The good of the word is the intelligence it conveys as to the Lord's mind, and if this be not comprehended, there is practically little use in main-

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taining the truth and divinity of the text. It is given for instruction, and it is the worst kind of deception to substitute loyal and true respect for the book, for the counsel of God contained in the book. And this is really the deception into which so many saints have fallen. They are zealous and faithful in standing up for the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible; but when you come to inquire whether they understand the object or purpose of God in unfolding His mind, they know comparatively nothing about it. Luther was a very faithful servant of God; but he never comprehended the counsel of God in its full scope, though he zealously and truly stood up for the Bible, and consequently he never emerged above the confusion in the Church. He never separated from those who assumed hereditary position as God's people on earth. He understood justification by faith and was most faithful to his light, but never in any measure reached the counsel of God which the word of Christ conveys. God abides faithful,

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and hence it is granted to a little strength to keep the word of Christ, and not deny His name. Every force around may be exerted to wrest the one from me, and to lead to a denial of the other; but God sustains the faithful in the midst of it all, even as this scripture assures us; that though the failure of the Church is terrible, and such as to have called forth from the Lord the greatest indignation, and eventually will result in its complete setting aside, as He says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth;" yet that there never will be a time till He comes, when the saints, if they have a little strength, will not be enabled to keep His word and not deny His name. That is, there never will be a time when the possessors of even a "little strength" will not be able to rise above the surrounding corruptions. And though they cannot assume any place of prominence or distinction, for no one else, save He Himself, may see or notice their works, they are superior to the apostate state of things. They do not hold in anywise, as Luther and the Re-

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formers did, with those who assume right and title to hereditary religious position on earth, with those who "say they are Jews and are not;" that is, who say they are God's people nationally and for the earth; and who will one day be compelled to own, that He has loved those who now assume nothing, but who through the grace of God are enabled to hold fast the counsel of Christ and not to deny His name. The not denying His name, implies that they have in no wise yielded to the substitution of any other name, spiritually or temporally; but have maintained the condition in which at the first (Matt. xviii. 20) He had promised to be in their midst. If even two or three were gathered to His name, He would be in their midst. His *name* was the great and simple thing to be maintained on earth by the Church, and which was very soon given up for the Church itself, as everything since on earth; councils, buildings, &c., testify. The blessing, joy, and power of the saints rested in their ability to maintain the name of Christ. Whatsoever ye

shall ask the Father *in my name*, He will give it you. Whatever was asked as suited and suitable to Christ should be granted. Peter and John acted on this when they said to the lame man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk; and as Peter says, "His name through faith in his name hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." And consequently the rule for every act is simply this, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Col. iii. 17.) Surely there is not one devoted to Christ personally who would not rejoice to discover the path where he might walk in a day like this, superior to the corruptions on every side. Truly, it fills the heart with joy and thankfulness to the God of all grace, to find that there is a line which a little strength can reach, where we shall be above the evil around, and in such a condition that our Lord and Master may be in our midst, according to the love and delight of His heart. Oh! that His beloved people

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would but awake to see how blessed is the path which is open and accessible to a "little strength," as indeed it has been found in every day to the faithful of God's people, be it a Joseph in the last days of the fathers, or a Caleb in the wilderness of temptation for forty years; or a Daniel in Babylon; or an Anna of great age who trod it fourscore and four years, when the great ones in Israel knew nothing of Him; or the widow who gave all her living—her two mites—for the temple when our Lord was leaving it for the last time; or a Bethany, or a Paul before the Roman tribunal. According as we see, at any time, the night grows darker, so we see that the faithful are always raised over the waves of ruin and apostasy. Let no one say he has even a *little strength* if he does not reach that path. If he does not, he has no strength at all, for strength is but grace turned to account; and by his not reaching it, he tacitly implies that God has preserved no way for His saints above the widespread evil and failure. But, blessed be His name,

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He has: and a little strength is enough to reach it, and to enable the soul to keep the word of Christ, and not to deny His name. These two points no true-hearted one could refuse to accept and maintain, and every one with a little strength can maintain them, and thereby be found in the only true and best place, pleasing his Lord in a day of abounding evil and failure.

May the Lord in His mercy awaken His people to their true calling and the deep full blessings connected with it.

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A CAREFUL reader of scripture, and particularly the one whose soul is fixed on the living ways of Christ which the four evangelists portray, will be struck by the fact that he is tracing the descending steps of the Son, who is in "the bosom of the Father," to the death of the cross and the closed sepulchre! What feelings of adoration on the one hand, and of humiliation and

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contrition on the other, will possess such a disciple's heart and conscience, as he closes the whole up in the settled conviction of a liberated soul. "He loved me and gave himself for me!" If the gospels give us the descending path of the Lord Jesus, with what relief to the overwhelmed spirit will such a reader open the Acts of the Apostles, that they may in their turn celebrate the ascending steps of the risen One, from the opened door of the sepulchre "to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." What wonder if the disciple, whose school time was prior to resurrection, should have been slow of heart and dull of understanding in putting these two opposite parts of our "great mystery of godliness" together, the incarnation and the ascension? It becomes some of us later disciples to say but little in the way of reproof—we on whom the unction and anointing have been poured out, that we might "know all things." This was too hard a lesson for Peter, when his master was daily with the twelve, leading their

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thoughts onward to the necessary connection of the sufferings and the glory, and he says, "This be far from thee, Lord, this shall not happen to thee;" though the same Peter, when under the Holy Ghost's teaching, will insist in his two epistles on their necessary connection in the pathway of our Christ and Lord.

God had joined them together, and in the two spheres of Christ's service, past and future, He is obediently treading the path, from the manger to the cross below, and from the cross to the right hand of God above, where He sits till that day when "the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and sit on the throne of his glory." A saint of this dispensation, who has learnt Christ from the cross, to the Father's throne, as the rejected One of this world, will lovingly hold the sufferings and the glory that should follow as forming the necessary links of that chain which binds him to his Lord and Saviour, but a saint of the next dispensation will as loyally separate them one from the other; for severed

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they must and will be, when the very trees of the field are to clap their hands for joy!

Old-Testament prophecy had pointed to this as the highway of Jesus Jehovah, and the Messiah will begin His own wondrous history from Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, and expound to the astonished disciples of that day the things concerning Himself. The spirit of Christ in an Isaiah and in a David will each take up some part or other of the veilings and unveilings of the Person of "the holy child Jesus," and the Psalmist of Israel will sing to the gates and to the doors from first to last, and charge them that they lift themselves up in their seasons, for the coming in and the goings out again by birth or by death, by resurrection or by ascension, till in the full blaze of His rights and titles, in a yet future day, "the King of glory shall come in."

The humbled and the emptied One—the obedient and the suffering One, passed into the place of the Man of sorrows, and made His strange acquaint-

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tance with grief, before He went into the deeper place of His travail and anguish on the cross, when, under the hand of God in righteous judgment for sin, "He poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors."

The throne is one thing, and the nature and being of Him who sits on it is another; though what God is, gives its character to government. The consequences of disobedience may also be distinguished from their causes, and these, in their connection, may be further distinguished in their relation to the ways of God as creator, or God as Jehovah in time. A remedial and provisional measure, such as Moses and the law, may come in and did, accompanied by promises and threatenings, till at last rebuke by the prophets and public chastisement in a "desolate house," and a "city trodden down" of the Gentiles, and a "people scattered" to the four winds of heaven, will bear their witness to a God who judgeth *in the earth*.

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Causes and their consequences, even in time, will speak another language, and tell another tale, when the hour is come for the heavenly host to celebrate by symphony and in song the glad tidings, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." Where all besides had slidden, He will stand immovable. Where all else had stumbled and fallen, He will find a new path, and make it for Himself, though it be, and must needs be, by sorrows, and sufferings, and tears, that God may meet Him, and own Him, and say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The God who shut the gates of Eden, and the Jehovah who closed up the land of Canaan, will go along in this new pathway of righteous obedience and anoint this "Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Ghost and with power," who is treading it. To the last step in His gracious ministry on earth, when "he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil," who is not delighted to see how all stands upon the

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great fact, "for God was *with Him*?" Yes, God is with man once more; but in what different circumstances and positions where the oppression of the devil is upon the populations and countries, as well as the weight of God's own hand in righteous government. Both of these, so different and equally real, this Jesus Messiah will make and has made His own concern in the life He lived, so that having cleared away obstructions and claims for judgment from before "the throne of God," and having made a new path for Himself and for God, both as a man and as an Israelite, the throne of Jehovah is liberated and free to set the One, who is now doing it on the earth below, on the right hand of the Majesty who occupies it in the heavens, in His proper season.

Gates and doors are all set free; the shutting out and the shutting up times are gone and gone for ever; bars and bolts and flaming swords are at an end, and the new cry is, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."

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Open doors and open gates again as we stoop down and look into the sepulchre below, or watch Him carried into the heavens above. Triumphs and victories again, and every one of them a blood-bought one. No longer a question of forfeited places and relations on the earth, in merely governmental ways; but the causes themselves are now between God and Christ—sin and death and the grave, and he who had power by their means, i.e., the devil! We are delivered for ever from these consequences by redemption work and resurrection power; and the very causes are put away from between God and His redeemed and blood-bought people. Christ has passed through this baptism, never to know a strait nor be straitened again. He has a title founded on His atoning sufferings to come back at the next appointed hour of universal deliverance and lead out into the earth and Canaan His beloved people, and to take into the heavens “the sons of God” in glory, and the many brethren conformed to His own image. Gates and doors are

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all thrown open and have let Him in and let Him out, in consequence of which, we, in our turn, can now say, in conscious peace with God, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

God Himself is no longer amongst men in the place of a Judge about sins, but proclaims Himself as the "Justifier of the ungodly that believeth in Jesus." He is the blotter out of iniquities and transgressions like thick clouds; till the day comes when on the threshold of "a new heavens and a new earth," He will make Himself known as the God who wipes away all tears from our eyes. The history of tears will then be at an end—sorrow, and crying, and death shall be no more; consequences cease with their causes; present things are become former ones; and what were future things to us are now the present ones. The flesh, the world, and Satan, sin and death—the guilty conscience and the troubled heart—are become to us in

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our actual experience things of the past, and we shall know them no longer save as the former things which are passed away.

Life—our new life—is no more to be entangled with the contradictions, whether moral or circumstantial, which we have known by the way; but life unencumbered—divine life—life eternal—known and enjoyed in and with Christ where God is, in the midst of all that is suited to it, and correspondent with the glory in which we shall be eternally displayed. What must that be which is the measure and expression of the Father's delight in the Son of His own love!

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE MARK OF A SERVANT OF CHRIST.

EVERY believer in Christ feels and owns that it is his duty to serve. It is inseparable from the true faith of a Christian. Nay, the extent and nature of his service, in any line, are always in

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keeping with the sense of the nature of his own blessing in Christ. In the service, whatever be the line of it, there is always an indication of the nature of the blessing known in that line, and according as the blessing is known, there is devotedness. This, I feel assured, is the real cause of the varied ways of serving which we meet in one and the same line. I am not now objecting to these varieties, but I desire to suggest a few considerations, in order that some of the varieties may be subjected to the test of the word of God, with the view of helping the true-hearted to see and accept the line which fully pleases the Lord.

The one simple path for any one who would minister to Christ is to follow Him. "If any man serve (*διακονῇ*) me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." *Why* do I serve and *whom* do I serve, ought to be my first question. I serve the Lord Jesus Christ, whose I am. But in order to serve Him, I must

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follow Him. All attempts to serve Him will be in vain, if I have not followed Him ; and in this passage, following Him involves *death*—death to nature, and this is the great mark of a true servant. If I am serving Him truly in any line, I have followed Him into His death, away from and outside of myself; and then my action is that of true ministry according to His mind. Where He is, I am.

If the way by which we arrive at true service were more clearly seen and observed, there would be neither a hasty engaging in it nor an indifferent way of discharging it. What a test would it be to every servant to put to himself the question, Am I following Him? It is not enough for me to do this or that, because others may approve, or because it is necessary or commendable in my own mind. I must, in order to begin according to His mind, first follow Him. It is not merely that I must be converted, but I must take the *same course as that which He has taken*. I repeat, what a test would this be! how

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rebuking to those who choose a way and path or line of service of their own selection ; but how cheering and consolatory to any one whose heart desires simply to follow Him, and thinks of nothing else, but who, in following, finds a line of service which he may reckon on as being the true one ; for it is not a line of service that he is seeking, but to follow Christ—dying out of everything here—carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in his body, and it is in this path that service according to the mind of Christ is known and fulfilled by him. Nothing can be a surer mark of a true servant of Christ than that he follows his Lord and Master, dead to everything here, even as He died out of it. Is it not fit ? Does it not speak to the heart and conscience that the servant of a lord and master who has died out of everything here should not only in duty but in affection follow in the same course ? Nothing could be more appropriate or seemly ; and assuredly it is because of weakness and

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unfaithfulness as to this that there is so little service now, according to His mind. Let any one patiently think it over, and will he not come to the conclusion that the servant [the fruit of Christ's death] cannot live in that for which Christ died? The Lord has died for me and has risen out of the penalty of death resting on me, to quicken me in His own life; and shall I now, if I would serve Him here, continue in that life of mine for which He died? or shall I die with Him unto myself, in order that I may live with Him and for Him? Dear reader, let it not be difficult to you to bow to this! The question is, What is service and to whom is it rendered? Is it not to Christ? Surely then, if He died for me, and that because of the life that I am in, as a child of Adam, is it not plain and consistent that I must no longer live in that for which He died? How else could I serve the one who has died for me, but by living in His own life? Could I presume to think that I could serve Him at all, save as I followed Him?—as I had entered into

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the power of His resurrection, which is death to myself? I believe that if every one zealous of serving Christ could but understand this first principle, this first requirement in a true servant of Christ, great and blessed service to Him would flow from it. No matter what may be the line of my service, it is only in proportion to my following Him that I am efficiently in it, according to His mind, ministering to Him. Self-renunciation—not merely self-denial—is the mark of a true servant. Everything connected with man, as man, is laid aside, as *dead* by him. Position, a recognized status, must necessarily be refused and disallowed. But not only this, service itself bears the stamp of the servant, as I have already remarked with reference to the various modes of serving. Each indicates (where there is real heart work) how Christ has been received. In proportion as the service of Christ to myself is known and apprehended, so must be my ministration of Christ in any line. “I believed, and therefore

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have I spoken," is the joy and the strength of the true servant ; and his service necessarily bears the force and depth of it. Thus it is, I believe, that we can and may account for the many varieties in serving, in one and the same line. Different apprehensions of Christ, as for instance, that of a Paul or a John, would give different modes in the same line of service. But in this day, it is not merely the divine varieties which we meet with, but we see believers zealous in proclaiming the gospel, and delighting in good works, who do not think it incumbent on them to die to everything here, position, &c.; and who, according to the truth I have noticed above, have not really entered on the path of a true servant, and do not carry the mark of Christ's ministers. What are we to think and say of them ? This ; that many are very true to their light ; but their services as a rule, are directed to man, and to his benefit as a man. Now, if these earnest souls were really following Christ, they would not serve less zealously, but they could not

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have man as he is, so much an object before their minds. If I, as the fruit of Christ's death, am really ministering to Him in a world of death, it can be in no wise to maintain anything here, but on the contrary, while seeking to alleviate the misery here in every possible way, I should very distinctly pronounce that there is no remedy for it, but in the life of Christ out of the death ; and this certainly cannot be pressed with any power or weight, while it is not acted on in oneself. The real reason of this failure in souls is not want of reality, but simply ignorance of their true standing, because they have only received Christ as conferring benefits on man, and therefore they can only follow the instinct in their hearts (true in itself) to serve Christ in keeping with their own apprehensions of Him. The instinct to serve is right, but from want of a true and full apprehension of how they are placed in relation to all here by being in Christ, and, as the fruit of His death, ABOVE and APART from all that is of man, they engage themselves with man

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as of the first Adam, and as if his history were not morally at an end in the cross of Christ. If I know that man's history is ended there in God's sight, I can only minister Christ, and the grace of Christ as the one risen out from among the dead. Some may say, "Then you give no place for good and useful works for man's benefit." Quite the contrary; I minister the only thing that can really meet man's case, but then it is not to maintain his status as man. What I press is, that every service should begin with this; that "if Christ died for all, then were all dead;" and that the true servant thinks of the deepest necessity first; and like a skilful physician, when the patient is suffering from a complication of maladies, he seeks to arrest the deadly one first; nay, his utmost attention is directed to *it*. But, to be *this skilful physician—this true servant* (one who does not personally suffer from the malady he would relieve) he must be one who has learned the power of Christ's resurrection. When a physician seeks to stay or check a mortal

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disease, while doing so, he thinks comparatively little of others. And, just so, a true servant, having found life in Christ, ministers of Christ in a dying world, not as of it himself, but as *out of it*, to those *in it*; that through grace they may receive Him who has risen out of it. He will also well and truly care for the sufferers in this scene of death—all patients in one vast infirmary.

"THIS IS MY BELOVED SON:
HEAR HIM."

Father, I would now draw near,
 At thy word, thy Son to "hear:"
 While thy heart He tells me o'er,
 Lo, I listen and adore!

Burst the cloud, and let *thy* voice
 Bid my longing heart rejoice;
 E'en as on the mount of yore
 Thou thy glory didst outpour.

Be that word within me rung—
 "*This is my beloved Son.*"

Father, shew me all that thou
 Seest of beauty in Him now;

Shew me that mysterious bond,
 Every human thought beyond,
 Seal of fellowship with thee:
 Thou in Him and He in me.

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"Father," *now* I know that name,
 Since thy Spirit cries the same
 As thy well-beloved One,
 E'en "the Spirit of the Son."

Wondrous grace! O love divine!
 All thy thoughts of Him are mine
 E'en to lisp; my infant tone
 Faintest echo of thine own.

Father, what shall I return?
 Aught of *me* thou needst must spurn.
 What I render thee, must be
 Worthy of thy majesty.

Such, O Father, I can give—
 Worth of Him in whom I live.
 Nought but Him thine eye can see,
 In the soul that worships thee.

Filled (as Israel's basket) here,
 Firstfruits to thy heart most dear.
 All thy treasure given for me,
 I present it back to thee.

Father, when to thee I soar,
 Then, O then, I shall adore.
Now I scarce the note can raise;
Then I'll sound it to thy praise.

Yet meanwhile, e'en now, "I hear"
 Sound (as music to thine ear)
 That blest chord from out the throne,
 Struck by thy beloved One.

He, the first-begotten Son,
 Leads the chorus: for each one
 "*Hears*" and echoes back that name,
 "Father, Father," sounds again.

THE CHURCH: THE PLACE FOR SAVED ONES ON EARTH.

THE evils of Christendom have arisen for the most part from undue exaggerations of truth. The leaven hid in the three measures of meal (Matt. xiii. 33) in parable indicated what we now readily trace or observe around. The truth (the "meal"), which was the proper food for the sustenance of the people of God, has been so added to and swollen out by the leaven of the human mind, that while the *name* of it remains, there is nothing more, to give any clue to its identity, with that under the same name set forth in the Scriptures. Now, often there has been, with an earnest desire to escape from, or effect deliverance from, a truth thus leavened and manifestly distorted from the divine intention, a disregard of the truth altogether, because of its being thus leavened, instead of a careful maintenance of what the mind of God is. That this is so with respect to the doctrine of the Church on earth in these days, I need only notice

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to insure assent and conviction. The doctrine of the Church, most true in itself, has assumed such unscriptural proportions and sentiments, that the tendency now with many earnest souls is to overlook it altogether. Salvation of the soul is made the everything, the all in all; the Church, nothing. The doctrine of the Church, it is true, became so leavened and distorted from the divine revelation of it, that men contended more for it, than for that which qualified one for a place in it—even the salvation of the soul; and the dogma that obtained was, that being of the Church, you will be saved; rather than being saved, you belong to the Church. But many now-a-days, having through God's mercy been awakened to this grievous evil and led to see that the un-renewed soul can take no place before God, and that his connection with any place on earth now, no matter how right or favoured, cannot avail in the sight of God, unless he believes in Christ, and has been eternally saved; but while they insist on, and zealously

maintain, this great cardinal truth, they are making it everything, and the Church nothing; that is, they are overlooking the great *end* (as to the earth) of being saved; they practically forget that the Lord added to the *Church* daily the saved ones (Acts ii. 47); that the Church is our *place*, because salvation is our portion. They do not seem to consider that the Church is the great thing in the mind of God during this period. Surely He delights in saving souls; but if the salvation of souls were His *entire* purpose now, it might be reserved for death beds, or any other unseen way. Really it is a solemn question, and one that many earnest men in the present day would do well to study before the Lord: What is the purpose and counsel of God in this day for His people? We know that in the time of Israel it was the Temple. We learn from the Book of Haggai that it was not enough for many of the children of Israel to have left Babylon, and again to be in the land; they were indeed delivered from Babylon—a great preliminary step;

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just as faith in Christ and separation from evil are now. But did that suffice? Hear the word of the Lord. "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every one unto his own house." (Hag. i. 9.) Many arguments might have been used at that time against the rebuilding of the temple; hindrances many, lack of power also, for they were still tributaries to a Gentile power; yet faith in God knew how to respond to His call, and His word to them is, "I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail, and in all the labours of your hands; and ye turned not to me, saith the Lord. Consider now from this day and upward even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid from this day I will bless you." (Hag. ii. 17—19.) God's counsel and purpose on earth then was set forth by the temple at Jerusalem; but now, His purpose, and the great work of the

Holy Ghost on earth, is to form and maintain the Church, which is Christ's body, here on earth; and surely if the children of Israel suffered so grievously in temporal things from overlooking or being indifferent about His then purpose, how much more must we suffer in our souls, for neglecting or being inattentive to His mind and purpose for His people now on earth? In attempting to avoid one evil, another of great magnitude has been fallen into. In divine things, it is not wisdom to repudiate altogether a doctrine because it has reached hideous and ungodly proportions; but, on the contrary, to weed out from it all human acquisitions; and this only can be done by ascertaining from scripture the divine idea of the truth which it falsely assumes to be, and then removing from it every addition with which man has leavened it. If I, in the recovery of one truth, deny, shut out, or weaken another, then the adversary has succeeded in neutralizing my services; and, alas! without knowing it, I am fighting for him. But with a truth of such moment and importance

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in the mind of God, as that of the Church is, how sad it is to see zealous servants of God faithfully and laboriously seeking to save souls, but at the same time evidently, if not avowedly, regarding it quite a thing of no importance. Is that which is God's secret, kept secret from the foundation of the world, a secondary thing even? If the neglect of building the temple was so severely visited by Him, what must neglect of the Church on earth be visited by? Paul was the "wise master-builder" of the Church, and what did he find in his day, but that all in Asia had turned aside from him, besides the men of note, Phygellus and Hermogenes. Yea, many preached Christ which would not follow in Paul's doctrine; and yet that is the first thing which is enjoined on the faithful servant. (See 2 Tim. iii. 14.) No Christian will deny that a soul must be saved first before it can take its place in the Church; but no one taught in the word will say that salvation of the soul is everything; but, on the contrary, such an one will insist, that it is only a

means to an end, and that the end is, the Church on earth, where a saved one should, as a member of the absent Christ, display, according to the grace given him, the way and life of Christ now, in God's habitation through the Spirit. Nothing more betrays how much more man's benefit is thought of in the present time than God's glory, than the simple fact, that evangelization occupies the minds and thoughts of the saints to the almost entire exclusion and ignorance of the meaning and intention of the Church. Surely there is joy even in heaven over one sinner that repents; but does mere salvation reach to fulness of blessing? Eating of the fatted calf was more than salvation, and yet anything less would not have suited the father's heart and pleasure. The prodigal might have been satisfied, but the father would not. Am I, as a servant of Christ, to study and limit my services to the satisfaction of the prodigal, or to the satisfaction and pleasure of the Father? The blessed Son observed, and through the suffering of death gave effect to, the pleasure of

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the Father. Blessed, most blessed, to be sent of God to sound the good tidings of His grace to the souls of dying prodigals; but sad, and fatal as to blessing, if such an one should overlook or disregard the great purpose in the mind of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; because it is in the Church, "the fulness of him who filleth all in all," that God unfolds all the treasures and greatness of His Son; and this is only known as I find, by faith, my place in the Church, the body of Christ here on earth. The true servant of Christ—in a day like this, (when the meal is leavened—when the Church is preposterously set forth, more as a way to salvation, than the true and only divinely ordered place of the saved, the spiritual house built up of lively stones)—would doubtless ascertain from scripture, what is God's purpose and revelation respecting the Church; and, having learned it, would seek to lead every saved one to his place in the spiritual house, baptized by the Spirit into one body, to shew forth the praises of

Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Would the evangelist imperfectly fulfil his mission, because his heart was filled with the present purpose and counsel of God on earth? Would he not rather, be then only truly a fellow-worker together with God? The simple fact that the saints are now builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit; that they are, through the baptism of the Holy Ghost, Christ's body on earth; ought to be quite enough to urge any faithful evangelist to seek the lost, and never to flag, until he has set each saved one within that which is the purpose of God during the absence of Christ. I do not qualify or screen the evil, the leaven, respecting the Church in Christendom by asserting and maintaining from the word, that which is God's mind on the subject, and denuding the so-called Church of all its assumption and formalities. I own that the Church is the leading thought in the mind of God. I endeavour to maintain it according to His mind, as that which is *par excel-*

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lence, the one great thing for God on earth; and I do not say, or imply by any laxity of mine about the Church, that the salvation of individual souls is everything; but a Christian should say and insist, no man forbidding him, that no one can be of the body of Christ on earth, but by and through the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and that every saint is below his place, and has not owned in faith the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, nay, that he is opposing Him, if he does not yield himself to that membership of Christ's body on earth to which he is called. An evangelist is one of the gifts conferred by the ascended Christ for the edifying of the body of Christ. (See Eph. iv.) His duty is not confined to a declaration of the gospel; he properly gathers the "lively stones" for the "spiritual house." He, as it were, hands in the stone; the pastor and teacher place and set it; and yet so little is the duty and calling of an evangelist understood, that not only is the evangelical commonly regarded as apart from the ecclesiastical, but some-

times we hear men, once earnest and zealous about church things, declaring, as if freeing themselves from it, that they will henceforth confine themselves to the evangelistic work! The greatest evangelistic work ever known was in the early days of the apostles, when three thousand at one time were added to the Church. "The Lord added to the church daily the saved ones." (Acts ii. 47.) The Church was the landing ground, so to speak, that the new born ones naturally reached. The evangelical is simply subsidiary to the ecclesiastical, and it has lost, and is deprived of its great aim and value, if the gospel does not place the soul, through grace, in the Church—the body of Christ. And any saint now not set in it by the power of the Holy Ghost, is neither fully happy in himself, nor is he in walk enabled to be a testimony of God's grace on earth.

If I stop at the evangelical, I am only taking thought for man, and have no real ability to rise above man's things and things of the world; but when I have found myself in the Church—the

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body of Christ—by the Holy Ghost, I begin to see that I must seek Christ's things, and as I see it, I have power to do so. A man may be evangelical and yet very worldly; but no one can be really and divinely ecclesiastical, and be of man, or of this world; because he is of and for Christ. Hence it is plain that the testimony now is not the evangelical only, but the Church, which is the only divinely ordered place for the saved ones at the present time.

BETHEL AND PENIEL.

HEAVEN AND CHRIST.

I HAVE been arrested by a thought on Bethel and Peniel, or the empty and the full Jacob—the Jacob of Genesis xxviii., and the Jacob of Genesis xxxii. The principles illustrated there, and the lessons taught, while equally divine, are strikingly different.

In Genesis xxviii. Jacob has grieved the Spirit; he has offended the Lord,

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having taken the way of nature, listened to the counsels of nature, and departed from his call and his path, as an elect one of God. He is therefore under discipline, and he must know the bitterness of this departure from the ways of life. His place, that night on which he left his father's house, was therefore the place of the people of God. It was the witness of his shame and evil, it is true, but it was also the witness that God was his God; had known him among the children of men, and would therefore visit him for his transgressions. The place is therefore such a place as may count upon God's presence. It was not the place of sin, but of discipline. Had it been the tent, where in subtilty he and his mother were preparing the calf for Isaac's feast, God could not have been there, but at Luz, the place of deserts and stones, where Jacob is under discipline, there the Lord can be and there the Lord does come. He comes to make *glory* a great reality to his poor, solitary, disciplined saint. He does not come to change his present

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circumstances, to soften his pillow, or to turn him back to his father's house. He leaves the present fruit of Jacob's departure from the way of God, just as bitter in itself as it was before. Exile and bondage were before him then, and they are before him still. But God comes to make glory a great reality to him. He comes to assure his heart afresh of the nearness and sufficiency of His own strength and favour, and to shew him how the resources of heaven waited on him, though in circumstances so bitter and grievous, to which his own way had reduced him. Onward, accordingly, he goes, and for twenty years he proves the taskmaster in the land of Padan-aram.

But his servitude over, he returns full of the blessing of the Lord; and He who met the empty Jacob on his way from Canaan to Aram, now meets the full Jacob on his way back from Aram to Canaan. It is however a different Jacob as well as a different journey. Jacob has now become "two bands." Flocks and herds, servants, wives, and children

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accompany him, who of old lay unfriended and alone amid the stones of the wilderness. *Then* it was discipline, but *now* it is unbelief which gives character to the scene under the eye of the Lord. Jacob trembles at the approach of Esau, for he has something to lose now; he has a stake in the world. He trembles, manages as well as he can, and religiously commits himself further to God. And the Lord comes to him—comes to him as surely as He had come to him at Bethel; but it is not to comfort, but to rebuke and break him down. It is not to break up the heavens over his head, and to speak in promises to him, but to wrestle with him. “There wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day.” This was the Lord in controversy with Jacob—withstanding him. His unbelief and slowness of heart had provoked the Lord to jealousy, and He comes to him as an unknown stranger, in mysterious struggle, to break down his will; and this is not effected until the strong man is brought to nothing; the flesh is touched, and

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crippled for life. But what is the issue of it all? Grace is made a great reality to him here, as glory had been made a great reality to him at Bethel. It is in his weakness (in figure, in the end of his flesh) that he gets his blessing. The Wrestler allows Himself to be prevailed over by Jacob, and in *weakness* he shall have the place of victor. Faith revives in Jacob's soul; he clings to the One who had wrestled with him and says, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The decision of faith, which will get a blessing, and will take no denial, asserts itself, as the strength and will of nature succumbs: his soul is restored, and unbelief yields to the confidence and joy of faith in God. At Bethel, the disciplined and chastened Jacob had been comforted. At Peniel, the unbelieving and wilful Jacob is broken down, and then restored. He had before walked close to the gate of heaven. He now walks under the sunshine of God's presence. The *house* of God was then his; the *face* of God is *now* his.

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Such was Bethel on his way out, and such is Peniel on his way home. Grace and glory, heaven and Christ, are great realities, and are all ours. Heaven in its enriching glories is shewn us, if in the sorrow of discipline; Christ and His restoring grace is made good to us, if in the power of unbelief or the will of nature. But while it is for our comfort that glory is realized to us in the day of trouble, and grace in the day of failure, it is needful for us to remember that until we own Christ's claim on us, and are brought to yield ourselves to Him, as was Jacob to the wrestling stranger, we cannot appropriate the grace, or get the blessing, or go onward in our journey in the sense of having seen God face to face.

It is important to maintain both our path and our place; the former on earth, the latter in heaven. My place gives me a character and resources in my path, for it is there I expend them. I have a fleet on the seas, bringing me all precious things, which I use in my path. They are the *virtues* of heaven, which I use on earth.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

CHILDREN, HAVE YE ANY MEAT?

THIS question of our Lord's, addressed to His disciples, after His resurrection, expresses, as applied to ourselves, the true test of our moral position now. He had declared, "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." Pasture was as distinctly provided by Him as salvation, for it was promised to any one using Him as the door. To be without pasture was simply to have overlooked, or not used the door; and hence, our answer to the question, "Have ye any meat?" determines our true moral state. It is not salvation merely that we have received; but we are set here as saved ones to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the mind and ways of Him by whom we live. Hence there are "little children," "young men," and "fathers" (1 John ii.), shewing the grades, not of salvation, but of maturity, in the divine life. We are "new creatures" in Christ,

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and we are to grow in grace and by the true knowledge of God. There is unmistakable evidence that one has departed from the place of the Holy Ghost, if there be not advance in the knowledge of Christ and His word. Let people excuse themselves as they may, there can be no doubt on this point. The Comforter was to teach all things and bring all things to their remembrance which Christ had said unto them (John xiv. 26); and further, in testimony (chap. xvi. 13) we read, "He will guide you into all truth whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." Turn to any part of New Testament scripture, and you will find one truth plainly declared, even that the whole service of the Spirit of God to saints now is to instruct them in the things of God, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." And to this end are bestowed all the ministerial gifts, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of

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Christ." It is plain from scripture that pasture is the great and distinct portion of the saints now, and that if they are not enjoying the good of it, there must be somewhere a grieving of the Spirit and a departure from the line in which Christ could meet us and minister to our souls. He now nurtures and cherishes His Church, and surely this is more than the salvation of the soul.

Now, even where it is not denied that pasture is provided, there is often great ignorance or dulness of apprehension as to what is really pasture. The Lord tells Peter to feed His lambs. Paul tells the elders of Ephesus to feed the flock of God. Surely this was not to preach salvation to them, but something more than salvation. Well then, what is pasture and how shall we be able truly to say that we are enjoying it? Pasture is the knowledge of the Son of God by which we grow up into Him in all things. The effect of pasture is growth; and where there is growth, without doubt there is pasture. We are new creatures in Him, and all effective ministry must

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advance us in our only true state and condition. The great delay to souls is the slowness of heart and dulness of faith to see ourselves on resurrection-ground in the Risen One, the last Adam; and then from this point growing on and advancing in Christ, who is our life, and source, and spring of everything. Oh! if the saints of God would but wake up to this one simple fact, that their beginning, and not only their end, is in the life of Christ, they would understand and seek to "grow up into him in all things, who is the head." But now ministry in the word, for the most part, is but urging on souls, how they are accepted in Christ, and how happy they ought to be. Even this, indeed, is in advance of the general order and scope of evangelical teaching, which is simply presenting Christ on the cross, suffering for our sins. If Jeremiah could "weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of his people:" surely we ought to lay to heart the imperfect, superficial way souls have believed in Christ. Take up what

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religious book you may, even the best, and you will find that for the most part it treats of the *way* in which rest for the soul may be found, instead of starting the soul from peace, and leading it into those higher delights which a knowledge of Christ imparts. I believe no one can *walk* in the path of righteousness, until he is in untroubled rest before God, and I am assured that the uncertainty in the walk of many is in consequence of imperfect peace in the presence of God. I invite my readers to this inquiry: Do religious teachings or religious books in general aim at leading souls *on* in Christ, or only leading them up *to* Christ for safety and rest from Him? Now it is as "complete in him" that I start in my new condition. (See Col. ii.) If you do not start me in my new condition, how can you advance me in it? I am not speaking of attainment here. I am merely insisting on the state of soul preparatory to growth. It is plain that I must know that I possess eternal life, and that I am by the Spirit united to Christ,

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before I can grow. The Lord says to His disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." But when the Holy Ghost was come, He would guide them into all truth. If not spiritual, we are like the Corinthians (1 Cor. iii.), but "babes," "carnal;" or, like the Galatians (Gal. iv. 19), we need that "Christ be formed" in us, we are not prepared for growth; or, like the Hebrews (Heb. v. 12—14), we have need of milk and not meat: we are "babes," unskilful in the word of righteousness. Now the little child of 1 John ii. 13—18 is prepared for growth. He is in Christ, "knows the Father," has "an unction from the Holy One," and knows all things, or as Peter writes (1 Peter ii. 2) "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Growth is the natural result of nourishment, where there is life and health; but if there be not life and health, there is no appropriation of the nourishment, the pasture. The purpose and use of pasture is to produce growth. If there be no pasture,

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there can be no growth. But if there be a desire for growth, there will always be a seeking for truth to grow thereby. The Lord *never fails* to provide pasture for His sheep. He is the door. *By* Him they enter in, and in Him they find pasture. If we turn aside, as Peter when he went a fishing (John xxi.) and induced his companions to follow him, we shall be toiling all the night and taking nothing. Hence the present sad state of saints, look where we may. They are without pasture; there is no unfolding of the counsel of Christ, and consequently no growth, no deepening knowledge of the Son of God.

THE SINGULARITY OF OUR
CALLING.

It is something strangely grand to see captives in their captivity superior to every blandishment and art, of those under whose hand they are, in one unbroken remembrance of their own Lord

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and home. Working in the mines or public works it may be, but not a thought beyond a mechanical one with anything around, save as it suggests a contrast; and every expression elicited from them savouring of deep and deepening devotion to Him to whom they belong, and who reckons on their faithfulness during His absence, until He comes to release them. I do not think we accept the singularity of our calling sufficiently. We feel Christ's claims are so paramount, that we think each and every one ought to acknowledge His rights, and the profession of Christendom induces one to adopt this; but oh! there is a great want of boldness, a distinct declaration, that as a Christian, I am called to be a messenger from heaven, with the mind of my absent Lord, in the midst of a scene which has rejected Him. An angel, if in such a scene, would have a magic ring about him, and why not one higher in divine intelligence than an angel? We ought to be fearlessly and perceptibly in the world like stars in a moonless night, seen,

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and used, but never made part of the order of things. Christianity is regarded too much as something to benefit man, instead of being the exposition of what God in His grace is, in His Son. I ought not only to set Him before every man, but to claim every man *for Him*, for all will be put under Him. If I were to be asked *how* this singularity could be acquired, I should reply, Only by association with Christ in glory. Singularity to be natural must be the product of life and nature, and I must grow in likeness to Christ in the developed instincts of the new man—of one matured in His nature—before I can naturally take this place of singularity. Then, I notice at once the sound and order of things here unsuited to me. I have not to sift or examine them; I am sensitive without any process of criticism. The very air of the world, as a low moral atmosphere, is dreaded by me.

IN THE PLAINS OF JORDAN.

We thank Thee, Lord, for weary days
When desert-springs were dry,
And first we knew what depth of need
Thy love could satisfy.

Days when beneath the desert-sun,
Along the toilsome road,
O'er roughest ways we walked with One,
That One the Son of God.

We thank Thee for that rest in Him
The weary only know,
The perfect, wondrous sympathy
We needs must learn below.

The sweet companionship of One
Who once the desert trod;
The glorious fellowship with One
Upon the throne of God.

The joy no desolations here
Can reach, or cloud, or dim—
The present Lord, the living God,
And we *alone* with Him.

We know Him as we could not know
Through heaven's golden years;
We there shall see His glorious face,
But Mary saw His tears.

The touch that heals the broken heart
Is never felt above.
His angels know His blessedness,
His way-worn saints His love.

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When in the glory and the rest
We joyfully adore,
Remembering the desert-way,
We yet shall praise Him more.

Remembering how, amidst our toil,
Our conflict and our sin,
He brought the water for our thirst
It cost His blood to win.

And now in perfect peace we go
Along the way He trod,
Still learning from all need below
Depths of the heart of God.

FRAGMENT.

Perfection must be looked for in God. He alone is perfect, and in Him is Jesus, in whom alone man can trace what is divine. That Blessed One when down here, was wont to see everything on God's side of it. "The cup which my Father hath given, shall I not drink it?" Cup of wrath against man's sin, held in Satan's hand before Him! Death, judgment, wrath! He would not see anything apart from His Father's gift, and to Himself. And does it become me to judge by the sight of the eye, and the hearing of the ear, and not to see the Father's hand and His love to me in any—in every—sorrow? *No! Now is the time to give up self.* Christ's presence will be the place to have giving up owned in.

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