

A  
V O I C E  
TO  
THE FAITHFUL.

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

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# A Voice to the Faithful.

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## THE CHURCH.

### ITS ORIGIN AND NATURE.

IN Matthew xvi. 16—18 the Church is first spoken of, and there we are told for the first time of its origin and nature, etc. Peter having confessed to Christ, as the Son of the living God; having, through the revelation of God to him, seen and learnt that Jesus, who passed among men as the son of Joseph, was no less than the Son of God. On this confession the Lord replies, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [a stone], and on this rock [i e., Himself] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Here the origin and nature of the



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Church are plainly stated. Simon was a stone, one to whom the Son of God was revealed, and therefore of the Rock on which the Church should be built.

The building would be on the Rock which Peter's confession set forth. The Son of God was here in the flesh, outside and apart from everything, as it was with men; and on Himself who only could be revealed by the Father to a soul, He would build His Church. Its origin being thus peculiar and distinct from anything of man, or known of man, and of and belonging to the Son of God, of itself determines what the Church is. Christ says He will Himself build. He does not state when, but only that He will do so at some future time. On the Rock of which Peter was a stone—that is, one enlightened in this great truth, that Jesus Christ was the Son of the living God, He says, “*I will build my Church; and the gates of hell [or power of death] shall not prevail against it.*” It was to be superior to death. The building could not then take place, for death was not as yet

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abolished. But the nature of the building was, that it was on the Rock, the Son of God. He was the foundation of it, and in Him, the eternal life, it would be superior to death. The origin and nature are only sketched here—foreshadowed; but even in the sketch, we get the great elements which were to characterize it all through—a building on the Rock. He to whom it was revealed, that Jesus was the Son of God, was of the Rock. Hence it was not of any thing, or any order of things, ever seen or known among men heretofore; because it was on and by the Son of God, now for the first time manifest in the flesh; and who, on the revelation being made to Simon, discloses His purpose: that there should be a building on this great truth; an assembly chosen of God, as the word Church imports; built on Him as the foundation; and because in His life, superior to all the power of death. It is, of course, but darkly announced here; because the time for its being carried into effect had not yet arrived, and could not arrive until

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Christ had risen from the dead; because not till then had He borne the judgment on man, and abolished death, bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel.

It is here stated as a prophecy more than an account of an existing thing, though here is traced for us the great fundamental principle of the Church; and if this principle be in any degree lost sight of, either as to the stones for the building, or the foundation—the Rock on which the building is erected—there will be weakness everywhere, both in one's own soul and in walk here for Christ. For the only true place for the soul in life and power is in Christ; and in Him, the Son of God, it is easy, and I may add natural, for it to occupy its place in the Church, the body of Christ down here, nay, one cannot miss this place if really on Christ.

Now, the Church is formed and manifested for the first time in Acts ii. The Lord added to the Church daily the saved ones. It is not only that they are saved, but there is a dis-

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tinct work of the Lord in adding them to the Church. Being added to the Lord, of course, is the preliminary; but it is important to note this saying, because it marks how definitely it was the work of the Holy Ghost, and not simply by an order from the apostles. The fact is, the apostles were not intelligently working for the Church; nor was the nature of the Church yet unfolded. They were offering to the nation of Israel the sure mercies of David; for the very existence of the Church of itself implied that the nation was given up; but though their intelligence was not then up to this, the Holy Ghost went far beyond their intelligence, and added the saved ones to the Church. The building on the Rock had begun, though it was not yet revealed, further than the Lord's words in Matthew xvi.; there was the baptism by one Spirit into one body. The revelation that the Church is the body of Christ, is not given until Christ has been finally rejected at the stoning of Stephen. Then the nation of Israel, by their council, reject the testimony

of the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Stephen to the Risen One; and hence when Paul was called, Christ in glory announces to him in the words, “Why persecutest thou *me*?” that the Church on earth is Himself. He being rejected from the earth, the secret of God will now be disclosed—even that Christ’s body is here by the Holy Ghost; so that the wickedness of Satan, acting on man’s heart, only brought about the unfolding of this great mystery, which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world. The Church is Christ’s body—that is its nature. He, the Head in heaven, to whom His members on earth are united by the Holy Ghost in a union which exists now, and which will be manifested in perfection by-and-by, in the Church for ever, in one unique company of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. But during His rejection His body is here, the Holy Ghost is here; and every one believing in Christ is baptized by the Holy Ghost, of which he has drunk, into this one body. The Holy Ghost unites the body with the

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Head in heaven; and thence, all supplies flow down to us walking in the fellowship of the Spirit. Thus when the body, the Church, was manifested according to its nature, it was said, "So also is the Christ." "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is the Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.)

But it will be said, there is no manifestation now-a-days of anything of this kind. This must be admitted. But the power that effected so great a manifestation remains (if the power—the Holy Ghost—does not remain, then the fundamental principle cannot remain: there is no foundation and there is no building). The manifestation has been displayed (Acts ii.); but now, while the same power remains, there is only manifestation of dependence in Him who has remained faithful. This is the case

in every time of general failure. The faithful do not seek to recover the distinction which they have lost by their unfaithfulness; but as they are faithful, they testify of His purpose to which He has remained faithful. They honour Him, and do not seek restoration of honour for themselves. Hence the heart is reassured by turning from the picture of the manifestation of the body on earth, to the Head in heaven, as is presented to us in Ephesians i., iv., v. Christ remains the Head, though we have failed in manifestation as His body. He is Head (unchangeably so, blessed be His name) over all things "to the church, which is his body." The Holy Ghost is here to fill and empower every one believing in Him, with the knowledge and strength of union with Him, the Head, thus imparting power to walk for Him down here in the Church. In chapter iv. He gives all suited gifts for the edification of the body; there is no failure in His giving ministerial gifts — evangelists, pastors, and teachers. He *has* given apostles and prophets—they belong to

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the foundation. There have always been gifts in the Church, but they have not been properly directed. Surely I need not adduce any evidence to convince my readers that there are many gifts not only improperly directed, but many also smothered up by worldliness and carnality. All I insist on is, that He gives them; and if not applied to the edification of the body, it is not that He has ceased to give; but that they have been perverted from their specific purpose. But even this loss—an irreparable loss as one might suppose—to the Church, He counteracts, as we find in chapter v., where we are told, “He loved the church and gave himself for it; and as no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, so the Lord the church.” He is not only unfailing Head to it, He not only gives ministerial gifts to edify; but He retains the ministry in His own hands, independent of every one. He sanctifies, having purged us by the washing of water through the word. No doubt, all ministry, though the most blessed

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gift, is only effective as the Shepherd's voice is heard, and as He plants the truth in the soul; but here He sets forth that He carries on the work independently of gift—He nurtures and cherishes the Church. If the gifts are perverted, He uses means to sanctify, having purged it, washing it with water through the word. He speaks to the soul. He fails not to care for and nurture, though the ministers He has gifted to carry His message and mind have entirely and signally failed to do so. Surely when we pass from the failure in manifestation of the body here, as Christ, and contemplate the Head, we are filled with wonder and delight, as well as being assured in heart, of the place which the Church occupies in the mind of Christ. We learn what its nature is, and where it had its origin; and if we see little here which expresses the body of Christ, surely, as we trace Christ's thought and interest about it, we are instructed and made acquainted with its being, as it is in His heart. And God grant we may learn what it becomes us to manifest, as

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our hearts are cheered and acquainted with His thoughts about it, in unchanging faithful love. May we not excuse the failure; but so grow in His nurture and succour, that we may accord most truly and heartily to His love for the Church, which is His body.

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## OCCUPATION AND POSSESSION.

(2 Cor. iii. 18.)

THE effect produced by beholding the Lord in glory, is transformation into the same image. If there be little transformation, there has been little beholding Him in glory. Occupation with Himself, *where He is*, necessarily gives me the same property as Himself. I get possession consequent on occupation. I am not only happy in His presence, but I have actual possession. Now the tendency of our thoughts is, to be more occupied with what He has done, than with what He is in Himself. People seem to think that they are losers, if not wholly occupied with His

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services to them; as if they must drop from His services, if engaged with Himself. Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, saw Himself. Was *he* a loser? There is nothing we want more than simple occupation with Christ *where He is*. The whole force of our existence here is resistance. I do not look for anything of this scene to contribute to me: I demand nothing from it. I have a possession outside it all. Do we not often see a saint under the pressure of some trouble which, when he gets into God's presence, he loses? he sees everything differently, and forms a different judgment of everything, because he sees it from God's side. Thus was it with the Psalmist. (Psalm lxxiii.) See how oppressed and cast down he is, until he gets into the "sanctuary of God" (ver. 17); and then, what a different opinion he forms of everything! and why? Because he had got into God's presence and had become occupied with a scene that gave another tone to his spirit; and enabled him to form God's judgment about things and about himself.

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“Then [he says] understood I their end.” You may know by the very way a saint speaks if he is occupied with Christ in glory; it casts a colour on everything about him. He is brought into the light of truth—into the light of God—and He sees things from thence. Being in Christ’s presence gives you the same order of mind that He has; you could not stay there otherwise. If you have been keeping company with Christ *where He is*, you have necessarily got the complexion of it on yourself.

When Moses came down from the mount (Exodus xxxii. 15) he saw all in disorder. He goes back to the mount, he turns unto God and his request is, “Shew me thy glory.” God shews it to him, and tells him everything; and when he comes down the second time, his face shines (Exodus xxxiv. 35)—he bears the reflection of the glory. I am brought with Christ into a scene of unclouded light, where God’s eye ranges in undisturbed delight, and where I can look up into His countenance with joy of heart. But I must not think that

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I can get there practically without trouble—without self-denial; for the trouble arises from the unwillingness to deny self. There is no escape from the enemy and his assaults but outside self. This kind, as the Lord announced when he came down from the mount of transfiguration, goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting. While any of self (the flesh) remains, Satan can find entrance and effect a landing. If I would be outside and beyond the reach of his power, I must surrender self, and this I cannot do, but as by the Spirit I live Christ. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. There is no gain without the cross.

Shall I refuse my place in the glory with Christ because it involves trial to myself? Caleb first searches the land and brings of its grapes, and then possesses the land. Our Hebron is gained the same way. There is no attainment but through suffering. The one who has got much *of* Christ, is the one who has given up much *for* Christ. You

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*must* deny self. Remember, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Satan will not let go his hold on you, until you are morally a dead man. Paul says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection;" and he laboured more abundantly than they all. If I am right with Christ, the body is not my master, but my servant. The body is Christ's; and He is my Master.

What is the meaning of that word, "Watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors?" We lose much by not meditating (the meaning of *Shiggaion* in the Psalms). The word to the servant is, "Meditate on these things: give thyself wholly to them." The idea is, the heart stopping to take in and ponder; and this it is that keeps other things out. The more you think of a thing, the deeper it gets into you; therefore, the more you think of Christ, the deeper is your sense of His being in you. Occupation with Christ Himself in the glory gives a different tone—a devotional tone, a quietness, and a comeliness; a pondering in the soul; a

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longing to get away from the daily life to breath out the heart to Him; yea, it imparts even a tone and weight to the manner and deportment. Others would see it in you, though you would not be conscious of it yourself. Moses wist not that his face shone, but all Israel saw it. The one who is occupied with Christ Himself is transformed, and others see it. But one may be happy in all the *services* of Christ; and yet have, or know, nothing of this transformation.

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## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. UNION WITH CHRIST.

How or where a believer is united to Christ is a subject of the greatest importance and interest; for though in the marvellous grace of God, the portion of the believer does not depend on the extent of his faith, or his estimate of Christ, and God has secured a portion for him according to the consummation of His own will in Christ; yet the believer only enjoys, according to the extent of

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his faith; and his strength and ability to walk and to please God, is necessarily according to his acquisition; hence it is of all importance that we should by faith accurately enter into the portion which God has given us in His Son. Every ignorance connected with it has a corresponding weakness, as indeed every apprehension seen by faith, and made good by the power of the Holy Ghost, is followed by a corresponding strength. This of itself is surely sufficient to induce every saint earnestly to search the scriptures in order that he may obtain the divine idea about every blessing which is conferred on us, and our apprehension of every blessing must depend on the certainty, vigour, and vividness, of our assured union with Christ. Hence the point for us now to ascertain and apprehend is, how and where we have been united to Christ.

There are three distinct periods, in one of which, it is variously alleged we are united to Christ. First, it is said, that we are united to Him in His life on earth; secondly, in His death;



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thirdly, in His resurrection. First, then, let me ask, could I be united to Christ as He was down here on earth? He was the Holy One of God; holy in His nature, as well as in His walk. Could we, then, be united to Him; we who are more unholy within, than even in our walk? How could union take place unless we had dropped our evil nature, and had His nature imparted to us? Could this have been during His life here below? If it could; if there could be union with Christ during His incarnation, then it must be before the sacrifice for sin had been made. If He has, as some have said, bridged over the chasm between man and God by His incarnation, where then is the judgment on the sinner? and what the need of a sacrifice and atonement? or where would it find a place? Is the sinner to receive of Christ's holy and immaculate nature, without judgment being enacted for the sinner? Could God introduce the sinner into an entirely new nature, without executing the judgment under which the sinner

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lay? Where is the righteousness of God, if this could be so? if He can set up a sinner in the highest condition, without any sacrifice, and only because His blessed Son came into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh? It could not be. No one believing in the atonement will for a moment assume, or entertain the idea, that we could be united to Christ in His incarnation.

But, secondly, it is said that we are united to Christ in His death. Now the Lord states in John xii. that unless the corn of wheat dies, it abides alone; thereby setting forth that He must undergo death, or He would abide alone; and if any could have been united to Him before His death, it would not be added, "*but if it die*, it brings forth much fruit." This the Lord said as descriptive of things relating to Himself; unless He died, He should abide alone. He was here on earth entirely unique, manifested in the flesh, capable of feeling and suffering anything which man, the creature, could suffer. He was here in the weakness of humanity; but

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in no sense chargeable or liable to the judgment resting on man, either by birth, or as yet vicariously; and hence He intimates when His hour was come, that there remained but one way for Him to relieve man of the judgment resting on him; and that was, by dying. If this could be accomplished only through His death, it could not have been through His incarnation, though His incarnation is the means thereto; that is to say, if He were not in the flesh, He could not have died, but then He must die, or He would abide alone: there could be no union with Him before His death. But here comes the question, are we united to Him *in* His death? Now union with Him in death would be subjecting us to all the severity of the judgment. It would be assuming that we could endure the wrath of God, which fell on Him; and if this judgment had fallen on us who deserved it, how could we have escaped? If we were ever under the judgment of God; we could not have escaped from it; that is, if the judgment had been carried out,

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which surely it was, in the cross of Christ. And if we had to undergo it in company with Him, where is the substitution, in virtue of which we should escape judgment? If I am united to Christ in His death, I am sharing in all the sinner's judgment, inflicted by God on Christ, and as a sinner, I never could escape; and if I did escape, it would be establishing the assumption, that God could forgive, after the judgment for sin had fallen on the sinner, after he had died under judgment. Again, if it could be so, it would be to say that I could be dragged out of the fire of judgment, because the Son of God bore me company in it. This would not be union, but partnership; like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. (Daniel iii. 25.) I should be a child of the first Adam rescued from deserved destruction, and like those three Israelites, in no wise changed as to nature or life, and only a rescued one; the first Adam state remaining just as it was. Certainly there is no union here. Union with any one is where I am a sharer of what that one

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is; partnership is where I only partake of benefits flowing from association. In union with Christ, I partake of what He is; "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." If He be only a leader, like Moses or Gideon, I am not united to Him, I am only rescued by Him; and if so, if I am merely delivered by Him, He is only a more distinguished leader and victor, than David or Gideon, and this effects no change in me, from the nature and state of the first Adam: there is no oneness of spirit with the Son of God. Nay more, if I am still in the nature and state of the first Adam, where is the righteousness of God against sin? and what has Christ died for? Is it only to conquer Satan, in order that his hold on man might be removed? This is true, but if it be all, where is the judgment of God on the first Adam, the judgment of sin which is death? The fact is, with such a notion, the death of Christ would be limited to a conflict with Satan in the power of death, and the salvation effected for man would be merely a deliverance

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from the power of Satan, the nature and the order of being remaining just as it was; so that if it be asserted that we are united to Christ in His death, it must either be, that we bear the judgment of sin which Christ bore, and are released by God after the judgment (which is the doctrine of purgatory), or that we are only delivered by Christ from Satan's power, and then there is no judgment of sin, but merely deliverance by the power of the mighty One. And, moreover, this deliverance is not union; because we remain the same as to nature and order as we were before we were delivered: all of which is untenable and impossible.

It remains then that the believer can be only united to Christ in His *resurrection* and *there alone*. The judgment on man is death—judicial death. If judicial death alone can satisfy the righteousness of God (“the wages of sin is death”—Rom. vi. 28), then the first man must end in judgment. If judicial death is the judgment, and if righteousness is only satisfied in the

exacting of this judgment, how could that man, sentenced to a judicial death, continue as an existence? If it were an ordinary death, the creature could be revived by sovereign power; but it being a judicial death, the life *could* not be rescinded; for if it were, the judgment would be foiled and righteousness unsatisfied. It is plain that judicial death can never righteously be terminated nor forfeited life revived. If it could, where would be the judgment, for the judgment is the forfeiture of life? Remove the forfeiture and you remit the judgment: it is a simple question of righteousness. What then does God's righteous judgment involve? It involves the end of the old man in judgment, and if man died this death himself, he would be eternally lost. But God's Son comes into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemns sin in the flesh, bears the judgment on man, but rises out of it. He is "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit." (1 Peter iii. 18.) He does not revive that which was under judgment;

but having borne the judgment, He rises out of it in His own life, the one solitary stem, from henceforth by, and from whom, life only can be had. “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” “And if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” (1 Cor. xv.) “He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.” “Wherefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Hence, the Lord on His resurrection stood in the midst of His disciples and proclaimed peace to them, for “he is our peace.” But more than this: He breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” As risen, He is the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit; and the Holy Ghost is given us, to make known in our souls, that the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The eternal life that was with the Father is now mine in Christ. The Holy Ghost unites me to Him (Rom. viii. 9) who is risen above all my shame and judgment, and on ground entirely



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new and well-pleasing to God. So that I can say, "I am crucified with Christ [that is, I morally drop my old man in His cross]: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the 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." I am united with Christ, as He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." No greater union could there be than communication by the Spirit of the same life. "In that day [John xiv. 20, the Holy Ghost's day] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." And thus, through His life, by the Spirit, we have fellowship with the Father and the Son: our joy is full.

It is thus evident that the believer is united to Christ in resurrection, where He has risen out of everything which checked or barred the love of God. We are now, through faith in Him, outside of the old man; so that we are free from that wherein we were held, and we are through grace "married to another, even to him who is raised from the

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dead.” (Rom. vii. 4.) “Old things are passed away: behold all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. v. 17.) So that now we are of Him, and through Him, and by Him, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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## FAITH SEES WITH GOD IN THE LIGHT OF HIS WORD.

**WHERE** and how can I learn the truth about myself, as a believer in Christ?

Can self supply this truth, if I look inward? Certainly not, because knowledge of myself will only disclose to me the worthlessness of that from which I am delivered. I must look elsewhere, and discover what I am in the worthiness of the Christ in whom I have believed and with whom I am one. Indeed, no experience of my own self, good or bad, must be allowed to interfere with faith's estimate of a perfect Christ for me.

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Where, then, are faith's best and brightest pages to be found, and where are our new lessons to be learnt?

The answer is plain : in Christ Himself—and in Christ upon the *cross*, if we would know *what* God dealt with in the person of our Substitute. Take as an example, “our old man has been crucified with him.” If I look into myself to discover a correspondence with this great fact, I shall at once contradict it, for I shall be still conscious of indwelling sin, and shall therefore say, “the body of sin is [*not*] destroyed.” But let me look at Christ on the cross, and I shall see that God has made *there* a certain thing to be true *of* me, which is not yet true *in* me as to actual experience of myself, apart from faith. Which am I to insist upon with my own soul? What God has made true of me in Christ, and what the indwelling Spirit witnesses to be true; or shall I allow my own reasonings, drawn from what the old man still is, to contradict this triumphant lesson at the cross?

This is a point where the natural

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heart and the suggestions of the enemy plunge many a soul into difficulty and doubt. What a defeat, if I reason only from myself to God; but what a victory, if I bring in Christ, and reason from what He has been made; between myself and God! Learning this, I must say, as the proper utterance of an emancipated soul, "*as Christ is*, so are we in this world," and joyfully add, "our old man has been crucified with him." Still I may fairly ask, How long is my faith in an outward fact (made true of me at the cross, by God's own dealings with my Substitute) to contradict and overrule my inward experience of my own nature? Will faith and experience never run along in agreement? Is *that* never to be true in me which has been made true of me at the cross? I reply, Yes, for our resurrection or change into "the likeness of the heavenly man" presently will make the thing palpable in outward manifestation, which was made true to faith long ago, because true as a fact between God and Christ, when "he suffered the just for the un-

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just." Christ not only took our sins, but was made flesh that all might pass under God's judgment and be put away for ever by the sacrifice of Himself.

The death of my Lord therefore, makes true the crucifixion of my old man. "*I am crucified with Christ.*" Resurrection will make this manifest to sight and sense. In the meanwhile, faith takes up and holds this truth with God, learning it not in myself now nor waiting for the glory to make it plain, but "*as it is in Jesus,*" that ye have put off the old man.

This is only one instance of faith's *reckoning*, which having to do with God, who "*calleth those things which be not as though they were,*" will accept no other teacher and learn in no other school. "*Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" It is the first part of this great subject that I touch on in this paper.

Perhaps the profoundest statement of a divine revelation regarding ourselves, in our present anomalous condition, as

## ALONE.

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old and new, dead and risen, crucified and living, is contained in that verse, already quoted in part. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Fearfully and wonderfully made! we may well say as we look outside ourselves upon all points and rest our souls upon a Father's love. "*Now* are we the sons of God, and it doth *not yet* appear what we shall be: but we know that *when* he shall appear, we shall be *like him*; for we shall see him as *he is*."

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## ALONE.

Alone!—a Stranger here—  
 Divinely lighting up a world of sin—  
 Didst thou, in grace, O living Lord, appear,  
 Our shadowed sphere within.

Alone! alone in love,  
 In grace, in holiness of truth; alone  
 Through righteousness all human thought  
 above,  
 Thou soughtest out thine own.

32      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Thou soughtest—'twas to save ;  
Yea, thou, the Lord, wouldst seek and save the  
    lost,  
And therefore was thy goal on earth, the grave ;  
Thy path of life, the cross.

Alone! 'twas thine to bear  
The awful judgment Adam made our due.  
Alone! for who wrath's chalice dread could  
    share?  
Who e'en thy purpose knew ?

Alone! forsaken thou  
Of God, thy God, when doing all His will ;  
Of man, thy creature, though thy thorn-pierced  
    brow  
Told out thy titles still.

Alone! upon the cross —  
Despised, rejected, and by sinners slain—  
Thou didst transmute unfathomed present loss,  
To heights untold of gain.

Except a corn of wheat  
Fall deep and die, alone it doth abide.  
Out of the Eater issued forth our meat,  
Thou livest and hast died.

Alone, the Victor now,  
Art thou in glory on the Father's throne ;  
Co-risen we henceforth thy claims avow,  
Thy place, thy life, our own.

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## THE CHURCH.

### CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE BODY.

WHEN we comprehend the constitution of the Church, the next inquiry should be, "How is it sustained in keeping with its true state?" If I clearly see that its constitution is outside everything of man, I shall easily come to this: that it cannot be sustained but by the power of God. Now we must bear in mind, that the Church as set up on earth, suffered from the hands of man. Man has spoiled everything within his reach. The Church was set up on earth. It was among men, and man instrumentally was responsible to maintain it. Paul, as a "wise master-builder," laid the foundation; and he adds, "let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon." The builders did not take heed; and hence, the Church in no little time, could be compared to a "great house," in which there are vessels to honour and to dishonour. (2 Tim. i.) The Spirit of God, which had so largely distinguished the Church on



## 34      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

earth as God's special and peculiar object, was ere long grieved and hindered, and this came about even in the lifetime of the apostles.

The Apostle John describes to us how the Church, as it is on earth, is regarded by the Lord Jesus Christ, shewing us that the only true course from henceforth would be that presented in Philadelphia. In the seven churches in Revelation ii., iii., I get the history of the Church on earth consequent on its failure, as it is in the eye of the Lord, and as it is in its testifying character down here. It makes all the questions about a visible Church, &c., very simple, if I see the Church as the Lord sees it in the seven churches of Revelation ii., iii. I can then see the elements working in it, as He sees them. The Church is there seen as the vessel of testimony on earth. I see that there is no visible mark of its peculiar place with God; no "coat of many colours" (the distinctive mark of love, with which Jacob graced the son whom he best loved), to declare how the heart of Christ is set upon it; nay, there

## THE CHURCH.

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is nothing of the great and beautiful spectacle, which the Church once was on the earth, restored to it. I see the faithful (as it had been in every previous dispensation) because of a "little strength," superior to the ever-accumulating mass of evil, and presenting *this* testimony on the earth. They are not distinguished by the Church's former ornaments, but they are remarkable for their separation from evil, and they are honoured by their Lord with an open door. Now this only shews me what the Church is, as a vessel of testimony; and as I look at it in this capacity, there is little to be seen and little to expect; hence I should never, from looking at it in its Philadelphian character (the best it could now bear on earth), derive that which would help me to reach and maintain this path of faithfulness. There is no manifestation of power in the position which they occupy; and hence, the one who can take or hold the place of a Philadelphian, is the one who knows that it is not the strength exhibited in the Church he

## 36      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

turns to, or depends on, but to the power and the virtue of the Head.

Looking for power in the Church on which to lean, has been a great snare, whether in teachers, or otherwise; and all the assumption in Christendom is simply traceable to this. They would invest the Church with power by some means or other. Temporally or intellectually, or as we know, even spiritually, the power was assumed to be manifested in it. If it had been held, that power belonged to it, because of its Head, then they would have been preserved from a corrupt and systematic hierarchy and other assumptions, and would have found, that while, because of unfaithfulness, there was no longer power manifested in the Church as such, yet that there was still all power, and every blessing for them in the Head.

This is simply what I desire to present in this paper, as it is unfolded to us in Ephesians i. When there is little or nothing to be seen in the Church, surely it is an unspeakable cheer to the heart to look up, and see and know, that

**THE CHURCH.****37**

there is as much blessing and power in the Head now as ever; and that one partakes of this as to the virtue and benefits, as truly as in the brightest days of the Church on earth. The more truly we feel how much we have lost by our unfaithfulness, the more shall we turn to Him who remains faithful; and the deeper the sense of our weakness and powerlessness because of our decline, the more shall we cling to Him who is the Head, and fountain, and spring of blessing to His body on earth; for His body remains here and He is true to it, though it be in the state that we see it in. In every falling away now, the first start in recovery is, by "holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, increaseth with the increase of God." And no one obtains power and ability to extricate himself from the labyrinth around, who has not begun with the Head; and having derived power from Him, reached the ground where He would have him, in the evil day; and it is where He would have

## 38      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

me be, that is the only true and happy place for me. The point of departure is of necessity the point of recovery. "Not holding the Head" is the point of departure; hence, the point of recovery is holding the Head. And surely nothing can in an equal degree cheer and encourage the true-hearted as the knowledge that Christ is the Head of the Church, which is His body. And no one can, in any measure, accept this truth, but he must find himself at once connected with resources and depths of blessing which are interminable. What a never-to-be-forgotten moment it is to the soul when this revelation has been first made to it: that though everything is feeble and out of tune in the Church, as seen on earth, yet that it has a Head in heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not headship as to position, but as to actual relationship. He is the Head of the Church, which is His body; and the soul in the faith of this truth realizes that it is by the Spirit of God, united to one in the relation of Head to the Church, in whom dwelleth the fulness

## THE CHURCH.

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“of the Godhead bodily.” When this truth is apprehended, the leading will be to the Head, and *from Him* to His body here. The Church is feeble and disorganized, and with nothing to encourage, but the Head is as full and perfect in love and power as ever He was, and hence there is always sure gain in turning to Him.

Now in the Head, as we see from Ephesians i., certain great blessings are secured to us. Let us just enumerate and note them in their order. First, we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Our place of blessing is in heaven; and then all spiritual blessing is ours in Him. Next, we are told how we have been set in this great place of blessing, “according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” Chosen in Christ before any sin, that we might be holy and without blame—fully in accordance with His nature, and hence in His love. But this election was also relationship, “Having

## 40      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." In Christ, His Son, He has us as His children, "according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he has accepted [or, *graced*] us in the beloved." The Beloved is the measure of the grace; and then is added, "In whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." This latter declares how we have been set free from the state of things which has occurred in the world, and from which we must have been redeemed, before we could be in Christ, according to the mind and purpose of God. But in this grace He hath abounded to us in all wisdom and prudence. All things are to be headed up in Him, and we inherit in Him. Hence the prayer—verses 18—23. The point presented here is the resources and greatness of the body *because* of the Head. He is spiritually related to His body on earth, as the head is related to the human body. And hence, in this time

## THE PATH OF LIFE.

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of failure and low estate, our union with Christ, the Head of the body, is an unfailing spring of comfort to our hearts; and not only so, but a source of power, so that we may walk here according to His will, and as His body, superior to all the evil and confusion around us.

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## THE PATH OF LIFE.

It is a reality, however little it may be realized, and blessed it is to know it as a fact, that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; that there is such a thing as the secret place of the Most High, wherein he that dwells lodges under the shadow of the *Almighty*; that there is also in this wide wilderness world—wherein is found no place for weakness or meekness, for poorness of spirit or pureness of heart, that there is here in the midst of it all, clearly defined, and with a bright light ever shining upon it, so that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein—a path, which

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## 42      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eye has not seen, of which destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears; nothing more. Where, then, is it? and what is the character of it? "It shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it. No lion shall be there, nor ravenous beast shall go up thereon; but the redeemed shall walk there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him!—those that dwell in the secret place of the Most High! Who are they? Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? Who? "He that walketh uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks truth *in his heart*." Those are the people, and that is their character. Is that a description of you and me? and yet what other description

## THE PATH OF LIFE.

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will answer to us? We are either brought to God, with honesty, and uprightness, and truth from and in the heart, or we are still in a state of eternal perdition. But are we belying our character, or expressing outwardly what we really are before God and in fact? As born again, what is the character of the new being? As made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, what is the character of the parentage? If all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, and that we know that we are of God (*ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ*), and that the whole world lieth in wickedness, how are we passing through it? Where lies our path? We shall see.

A Person once, who answered to the above description (Psalm xv. 2), who, though God Himself, was the perfect expression of it as man, visited this earth of ours and found it also just as described above. To Him, as to us now, was shewn that path (Psalm xvi. 11); and He, having tracked it all through, arrived at the place whither it led, viz.,

## 44      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

where "there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore," and has left us to do the same, only with this difference, that He has taken the sting out of that through which it led; and has given us, in spirit, to enjoy the full fruition of the end of it at once.

In this Psalm (xvi.) the victory rather than the conflict, is in mind; thereby the path made doubly clear to us as being a victorious one, for such it is to faith, that victory that overcometh the world, that faith which rides triumphant over everything, and walks upon the boisterous waves of the ocean; but which runs counter to everything that is pleasing to the eye of nature. O for more of it! O to live more in the power of it! to look more on things unseen; to be beholding more, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, so as to be changed into the same image; and to have more of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in our hearts.

As we were saying, a Person came here, a very man, and found things much

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the same as they are now, only that there is more guilt now, for by wicked hands He was crucified and slain. As a man He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. In His walk here, He was entirely and in heart dependent on God, His God; and thus found Him the portion of His inheritance and His cup, and the maintainer of His lot; and notwithstanding all that was against Him here on earth, viz., the wickedness of man and his perverseness, and the enmity of Satan with his power over man, brought into action against Him with all its force—yet, notwithstanding, He could say, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage; my reins instruct me in the night seasons.” But the secret of it is this: “I have set the Lord *always* before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.”

Alone, this Person was, yet *not alone*. There were those in whom was all His delight—the saints in the earth, the excellent. In another place we find, “Then came Jesus to John to be bap-

## 46      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

tized of him." (Matt. iii. 13.) Then also "all the people that *heard him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves." (Luke vii. 29, 30.) Here was a people who came confessing their sins, who owned God's judgment on the state of things, and on themselves as being part of it; but as taking their place in repentance. With *such* this Holy One could take His place; and such He could own as the "saints of the earth," the remnant of Israel.

And is there no remnant in these days? Has the Church so fulfilled her mission, and been so entirely free from failure, as to abide as a whole in testimony and leave no occasion for a remnant? Surely not. And if such be the case, where is it? And have you and I not only found such a remnant, but also found our place among them? If we have not, we are not following the line of the "Path of Life," nor is He with us, however gracious He may have been

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in meeting us with His saving grace, and in revealing Himself as a Saviour to our souls.

But to return to Psalm xvi. Though death is not expressly introduced there, the grave is; and that which rises victorious above that dread monster, even incorruption, is put in strong relief, reminding us blessedly of life and incorruptibility (*αφθαρσίαν*) being brought to light through the gospel, the power of God who hath saved us, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; now made manifest by Him who has abolished death. Be not thou ashamed, therefore, of the testimony of our Lord. (1 Tim.)

Is this a path for flesh and blood? No. The Lord knew this when He said to Peter, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice." For men it is simply appointed unto them once to die, and after that the judgment; but this path which we have been dwelling on, strikes out just as clear and defined, if

## 48      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

not more so, at the other side of the grave. Having threaded its way in all its holiness, and purity, and beauty, through the valley of the shadow of death, through the sepulchre, it leads right on to His presence, where, in the full blaze of light and glory, is *fulness* of joy.

Flesh and blood—child of Adam—stand aside, this is no scene for you. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption. How is it with us? In Adam or in Christ? Blessed be God, in Christ and in the power of resurrection. For He has made Him to be *sin* for us, that we might become God's righteousness *in* Him; and therefore the apostle could say, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. To be found in him, having the righteousness which is *of* God [*την εκ*] by faith: that I may know him and the power of his resurrection," &c.

In spirit there already,  
 Soon we ourselves shall be—  
 In soul and body perfect,  
 All glorified with thee.

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I do not seek to apply—I leave that to each conscience in the light of God's presence; but would remind each of these closing words to the Church in the last days:

“These things says he that is *holy*, he that is true; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: thou hast little strength, hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. I also will keep thee out of [εκ] the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that *dwell* upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly.”

'Tis the treasure I've found in His love,  
That has made me a pilgrim below;  
And 'tis there, when I reach Him above,  
As I'm known, all His fulness shall know.

Till then—'tis the path Thou hast trod—  
My delight and my comfort shall be;  
I'm content with Thy staff and Thy rod,  
Till, *with* Thee, all Thy glory I see.

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## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

### SERVICE.

TRUE service is to Christ, who is both Lord and Master. Though we may be the “servants of the Church,” the Church is not our master. We shall and ought to serve the Church, but we must take our orders from the Lord; and for His sake, and in subjection to Him, serve whomsoever, wheresoever, and howsoever He may appoint. True service flows naturally from life, and is the work of love. There is no effort in it, no perplexity about it. It is whatsoever the hand findeth to do for the Lord, done readily without question. But it can only be performed in communion. If the soul is not in communion with the Lord, there can be no true service. The Lord as sovereign may and does use whom He will, taking up often the unclean vessel and instrument, and displaying His power or His grace through such. But this is not service, at least not such as the heart of any saint desires for himself. That cannot

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be called true service which does not proceed from affectionate and intelligent apprehension of the Master's will. An instrument is not a servant, at least not in a happy sense, though, alas! from our low condition, we are more often thus used than in distinct communion with the Lord concerning the matter in hand

There is, however, one thing which all can do: that is, be "*meet* for the Master's use" (2 Tim. ii. 21); and this is the secret of usefulness. Usefulness is not activity; it is not the merely being used, but it is fitness, cleanness, preparedness, and separation of heart; singleness of eye, the affections set on things above—all in fact that proceeds from the judgment and denial of self, and the dwelling of Christ in the heart by faith.

A true servant is always ready. "Here am I"—"Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" express his condition. He does not choose his work, but obeys his Master. If he has nothing given him to do he is quiet and patient; when he

## 52      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

gets his Master's order, he does it joyfully without demur.

Nine-tenths, or more, of our difficulties about service, are from lack of intelligence as to our Master's will. We wait and wait for some great commission, and often leave undone the thing present. We shrink from the work which the Lord Himself may be putting before us, and desire to be used in other service in which He does not require us. The consequence of this unsettled and unsubject state, is complete uncertainty as to what our proper work may really be. The large majority of saints would confess that they do not *certainly* know what the Lord would have them to do. They would like to serve Him, and they try to do so again and again, putting their hands to this and that thing without effect. There has not been the sitting at the feet of Jesus to learn His mind before the attempt at active service.

Again, how common is the complaint of Martha: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve

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*alone?*” How that little word “alone” betrayed the character of her service. If I am for His own sake serving my Lord in faith and love, I shall never complain of serving alone. Indeed all true service is in one sense alone. It is founded on individual responsibility and faith. We serve our *own*, and not another man’s master. Fellowship in service, when we get it, is indeed a happy thing; but the faithful servant who has His Lord’s mind, and is serving *Him*, will never murmur at being alone, or desire the mere aid of another not called to, nor having heart for, the same work. To meet a fellow-servant walking in the same line of service, and so to serve together, is very blessed, but it is rare. A “true yoke-fellow” is not often met with, nor, as we learn more of the Lord’s ways and our responsibility, shall we look for it. The harvest is great and the labourers are few; and if each were doing his own work, he would not be looking for help from other servants doing theirs. There is much misapprehension on the subject of fel-

## 54      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

lowship in service. Saints give it a low place and often a wrong one. They think, for instance, that they, without question, may serve in fellowship with those with whom they have no communion at the table of the Lord. They do not see that our fellowship in Christ is the first thing to be owned, and that this is properly displayed at the Lord's table. If I am not agreed with one as to this, how can I consent to sink this vital ground of communion to take up with him the lower ground of service? And yet, again, it is not *merely* because we have taken our places at the Lord's table, that we can serve together. In order to this, there must be that brotherly confidence in the purpose of heart, the walk and the ways of another, which, it is needless to say (though painful to admit), does not necessarily accompany a right church-position. This was true in Paul's day: it is true now to the true servant of God. So it is a legal heart that murmurs at a lonely path of service. Still, a true servant may mourn the inactivity of others; but

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that was not Martha's thought. She could not exactly rebuke Mary's better choice; but she was sinking under the weight of a service undertaken in her own strength, apart from faith, and unsought for by her Lord; and it was her own relief she sought, and not that Mary should share with her any blessing in the path. And this part of the Martha character stamps the service of most of those professing Christianity in the present day. Association, human energy, direction, and organization, are all considered essential and excellent in religious effort. Mission work, evangelization, as well as philanthropic works, are in the hands of societies and committees where all individuality is swamped by the mass. It is easy to serve with and as the multitude. It is easy to be one of a committee or of a society, or to serve in a line of things made ready to the hand. It is only when a Christian is led towards a true and scriptural church position that he begins to learn, or is in the way to learn, what service really is; and this, I believe, accounts to a great

## 56      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

extent for the accusation brought so commonly against "some" of "ceasing to be useful" when they leave the associations they had been connected with. As I said before, it is easy work in society where all is done by rule, or in any of the thousand ways in which the religious world carries on its works. But when we leave these human arrangements, and are cast upon our individual responsibility before God how to serve Him, unsupported by the arm of flesh, it finds us out where we really are, and the man whose energy under a human system has been marked, often finds himself for a time brought very much to a stand when he takes his proper place as a member of the body of Christ, and waits for the manifestation of the Spirit as to his path of service; but if faith be in exercise, though his path of sight and sense be shut up to him, another way will speedily be opened, and his abstinence from active service will not be for long.

If there be true dependence upon God, and purpose of heart to *be* anything or *do*

## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

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anything He may appoint, there will be no lack of work to do, nor lack of joy in the doing it: for most certainly the blessing to our *own* souls in serving *Christ*, is not in proportion to the outward show our work may present, or the apparent fruits of our labours; but just in extent as we are conscious of the guidance of His eye, and are in communion with the desires and purposes of His heart and mind. On the other hand, in those who have not learned individuality in service, there is much disappointment and consequent discontent. For one Christian who knows his path of service, and is satisfied to walk in it humbly and quietly with his Lord, there are fifty in a restless, uncertain mood, desiring activity, but ignorant of what to be at. If the true servant strikes into a service which the Lord evidently calls him to and owns, the fifty others are ready to imitate his line of things. And all this uncertainty causes the discontent and murmurings so often heard amongst saints of "lack of fellowship," "want



## 58      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

of care for souls," "no evangelistic effort," &c.; those who murmur loudest generally being those who have the lowest sense of individual responsibility, and the least power from God for a distinct path.

Still we must *all* confess to sad shortcomings, coldness, deadness, slothfulness. But the remedy is not in "murmurings and disputings," but in self-judgment and purpose of heart to learn, and from henceforth to *do*, our work for God. All are not preachers. But all have a place in the body of Christ; and membership implies activity and life, responsibility to the Head, and care for the members. All have a God and Saviour whose doctrine they are called to adorn in all things. All of us are living in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom we are to shine, "holding forth the word of life."

If we be meet for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work, we shall soon find that there is no time for complaint, but that the time rather fails us to do the *many, many* things the

## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

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Lord will put before us day by day, and hour by hour. We may not have to preach to great congregations nor even to small ones; but there is plenty to do besides preaching, and many a little work unseen and unknown by any but the Master Himself will get its reward in that day when every man shall have praise of God.

But the conclusion of the whole matter is, that we must be near to God in heart and conscience before we can serve Him acceptably. Let us, then, seek for this first of all, so that our service may be as the calm and settled stream flowing from full hearts, whose highest interests are the interests of the Lord whom we love. Next, as once was said by another, "Let each find out from God what his work is, and then *do it*;" or, as Paul put it to Archippus;—"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." (Col. iv. 17.)

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## THE GLORY AND THE CROSS.

WHEN Christ is our object, other things necessarily must have ceased to be such. Many sincerely desire that He should be the object of their hearts; but they are very unprepared for the process by which they are led into it fully. It is as I am sensibly deprived of everything else, and find that I have no one else but Himself, that I realize in good degree what it is to have Him as all-satisfying. If I have nothing else, it is plain He must be my object; if my heart has known what it is to rejoice in Him, everything else interferes with me in some measure. Paul is speaking of himself (Phil. iii.) while in prison. Every natural interest for him on earth, even as Christ's servant, was *cut off*. But that is the *time* to realize what He is fully, when there is nothing else left. *Then* His sufficiency only can be known. It is as with Jesus in the ship (Mark viii.), and only one loaf. He is all I have; and when He is all I have, I learn His value. The privation is necessary in order to throw me entirely on

## THE GLORY AND THE CROSS. 61

Him, that I may learn His sufficiency, and that it is only something secondary to Him I have lost. Any mixture necessarily detracts from Him. If I have nothing but Himself in the ship, anything I enjoy—anything in it—must be simply from Him. I desire Him to be my object, and as I do in truth, I am prepared for everything which might interfere with my enjoyment and knowledge of Him to be set aside. And as the heart is true and prepared for it, it *accepts* this process.

When Christ is my object, I find *first*, that the knowledge of Himself is so excellent, that I turn away from MYSELF *entirely*; this is the firstfruit of Christ being known as such. It is not my *evil* nature, but all the BEST of me I count but “dung” that I may win Christ. It is no wonder that I should desire to be rid of, or to have set aside my *bad* self; but to count all my better self as utterly worthless and untouchable, clearly shews that I have found in Him a surpassing excellence. In the light and enjoyment of this excellency, I turn away *entirely* from myself and count it all

## 62      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him. If your better self claims even notice from you, you have not realized what He is as He would be, if He were your object, *as He was to Paul*. The immense superior righteousness in Christ, throws every good of man into the shade or worse—it is as dung: untouchable in comparison. Paul has nothing now but Christ. He is the simple object of his soul. We must see what Christ is, before we are lost in Him; before we live in reality in Him, and He in us. But there is a step farther on. We are now considering what my state is when He is my object. He is so when I know Him, and when I have no other: when I am the widow here who has lost her only son. The last link to nature is the most difficult to be severed. Paul speaks not of loss, because in Christ he had incomparable gain. We feel a chill coming over us at times, at the privation we may be called to pass through. The value of Christ always comes before the deprivation, which is sent to establish the value to us. We do not feel we have lost, though we do feel we

## THE GLORY AND THE CROSS. 63

have suffered. A man may suffer to win ; but if he has won, he *knows* he has, though he cannot forget how much he suffered to win. The suffering is past, but the gain *continues* ; and he who has suffered most, will not dwell on his sufferings most, but on that for which he suffered—if it be worth the suffering. But Christ being my object, satisfying my heart, my hopes are two-fold, or rather my purposes : one, relating to my path *on* earth ; the other, *out of it*. As to my course here, my purpose is to “ know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death.” I present to myself martyrdom : that is my goal here. We may not all be called to martyrdom ; but the heart which has Christ simply for its object here, contemplates no lull in the storm, no retreat in the evening of life, where in a calm and cloudless sunset to pass away from this scene. It has no such hope or purpose. To be as He was here, is the purpose and hope of the heart which has Him for its object ; and hence the fellowship of His suffer-

## 64 A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

ings is looked for, if actual death is not ordered of God. This is the course which the heart, in hope and purpose, prescribes for itself here. And yet it is bright and cheerful all the time, for it looks beyond this scene, and can say, "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, I press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There is a *known* mark to which I am hastening, where there is a prize; a prize in heaven and fellowship with His sufferings *here*, comprise the twofold purpose or hope of the one here, to whom Christ is the one object—knowing Him better, and proving Him better, as everything here passes away. Not merely occupied with what He can *do* for me; I remember what He *has* done. But now knowing Him, He is everything to me, and my course on earth is in fellowship with His sufferings on earth; and outside of it, I press toward Jesus in glory for the prize; so that, to be as He was here, and as He is there, is the course and purpose of my heart.

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## PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

### THE EFFECT OF THE WORD OF GOD.

CHRISTIANITY is aggressive. It carries on a warfare with powers unseen though not unfelt. It has for its sphere, the world; and for its object, to turn souls from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Judaism was strictly conservative. God had confided to Israel the testimony of the existence of one true God. "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." (Deut. vi. 4.) The idols of Egypt have been unconscious witnesses of His power. Israel had experienced again and again that He was God, and there was none beside Him. In the midst of the nations of the earth they should have preserved this testimony; for preservation of truth communicated, not the conversion of others, was the special service given them with reference to the kingdoms with which they had intercourse. God's people they were: this was a privilege none others could enjoy. The stranger, if circumcised, could eat



## 66      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

of the passover; he could also rejoice with Israel at the feasts of weeks and tabernacles before the Lord; but he remained a stranger still. From the day of Pentecost a new order of things commenced. Simeon had predicted that the Lord would be “a light for a revelation of [*not* to lighten] the Gentiles;” and James, at Jerusalem, years afterwards, bore witness that “God had visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name.”

An exodus as real as that of Israel from Egypt, though not manifested in the same way, ought surely to characterize the accomplishment of this purpose. Though no external marks of divine displeasure as yet appears on that which they leave, those brought out should have as deep a sense of the worthlessness of the world, and the things of the world, as ever Israel had when judgment was executed by Jehovah on the gods of their taskmasters. Should there not be as marked a coming out from all that formerly enslaved the soul, as when the 600,000 men, besides

women and children, journeyed from Rameses to Pi-hahiroth, and then traversed the bed of the Red Sea? All Egypt knew that Israel had departed. Should not the world be constrained to attest the reality of the conversion of souls?

Is this commonly the case now? Was this the character of the work in apostolic times? We leave to the reader to answer the first question. Is not what follows an answer to the second?

At Rome, at Athens, at Corinth, at Ephesus, as well as at Jerusalem and Antioch, God worked and souls were converted. But at Thessalonica a work was commenced, carried on, and completed within a few weeks, as far as the apostle's preaching was concerned, which became a pattern or "type" of what may be achieved by evangelization, and what those evangelized should exhibit. And the example the church at Thessalonica set is the more valuable, because the majority certainly of the converts were, previous to the apostle's visit, heathens. The change to them

## 68      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

and in them was immense. The marks of it as seen by others were unmistakable. These converts had a faith, a definite hope, and a clear object before them. No haze clouded their minds; no uncertainty dimmed their perception of the truth. The message was plainly delivered, and simply received. They had life, and life in its activity, developing itself in a healthy and true way. There may be, how oftentimes there is, such feebleness of life that its very presence is doubted. In Paul's mind, there was not a mere hope about their spiritual existence: there was certainty. He could thank God for their decided conversion. He "remembered without ceasing their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope of the Lord Jesus Christ." The work in them being real, he could speak to God about it. He thanked God for the fruits brought forth. He saw by their progress, he knew by their life, that they were of the number of the elect. Hence he owns them as brethren, and writes of them as beloved of God; "Knowing,"

## PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

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he writes, "brethren, beloved of God, your election." Their faith, their love, their hope, all these were manifest. And this epistle, though written soon after their conversion, was not penned till their steadfastness in the truth had been tested, and the reality of their faith plainly demonstrated. (1 Thess. iii. 6.)

They had suffered persecution from their countrymen (chap. ii. 14), yet their faith had not given way (chap. i. 3; iii. 6). They had endured much, yet it had not soured them. Their love to the brethren was patent: on that score Paul had nothing to correct; he had only to urge an increase of it. It had spread far and wide, even to all the brethren which were in all Macedonia. It reached even beyond them, for it embraced all men. (Chap. iv. 9, 10; iii. 12.) They had given up a position of present ease for one of trial and persecution. They had a hope, but they knew it could never be fulfilled on earth, yet they fainted not. The enduring constancy of the hope of (*not* in) the Lord Jesus sustained them. Thus life in its activity,

## 70      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

life with its characteristic affections, life in patient endurance of tribulation, was theirs; and this life was divine.

But what had wrought this change? "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." They heard the word, they felt its power, they were made sensible of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and full conviction of the truth preached rewarded their souls. What effects can proceed from the reception of the gospel, "our gospel," as Paul describes it, when received not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which works effectually in them that believe! They heard Paul and Silas preach; but the words, they felt, conveyed truth from God to their souls. It was God's word to which they gave ear, which quickened, and after that continued to work in their hearts. Conversion with them was but the commencement. The word then began to work in them, but did not then stop working in their souls. The instrument employed was divine

## PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

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and effective; and the lives of the agents bore testimony to the power of the same word over their souls. Joy filled the hearts of these simple believers. They received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost. As they received the truth they felt its power, and made those around them sensible that they felt it.

Situated on the great highway between Rome and the country north of the Ægean Sea, the report of their conversion was not confined to their town and its vicinity. "From you," he writes, "sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you." So decided was the change, so manifest the work, that all were speaking of it. Those in Macedonia and Achaia heard the report of it. Those surely who could not understand it yet talked of it. Paul and Silas had, we cannot doubt, many interesting

**72      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.**

details about it, which they could have communicated to others, but they had no need to make known the work that had been done. From the converts, not from the evangelists, people discovered it.

Well might the Gentiles take note of it, for the change was great. "They had turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God." Objects of sight had been given up for One they had never seen. As a living God they owned Him, for they had experienced His power to impart life. As a true God they confessed Him, and forsook the worship of idols. The ideas of a lifetime were discarded. Faith took the place of sight. It was not a change of gods; but the finding for the first time of God. The position now taken up put them of necessity in opposition to all around them. Divided service for them there could be none: all the gods of the heathen had become to them vanity. There was but one living and true God, and Him they would henceforth worship. And let us observe the

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language—"They turned to God from idols." It was not a mere negation that occupied them; it was not a position of protesting simply against error, that they took up. It was something positive their hearts were occupied with—they turned to God from idols. Nor was it a desire to emancipate themselves from all control that possessed them; for they turned to serve a living and true God.

Had He given them all they desired? He had in prospect, but not in possession. Their condition on earth did not improve by the change; it became sensibly and permanently worse. They found enemies among their countrymen they had never found before. They found, too, vehement opposers among the Jews, who had never troubled themselves about them when heathens. Yet they were steadfast; for they waited for God's Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, who delivered them from the wrath to come. Their very attitude spoke volumes. It spoke of a hope unfulfilled, a desire unsatisfied, an object

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**74      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.**

unseen. For this, for Him—for it was a person — God's Son, they waited. Earth was no longer their home. Their eyes were turned up to heaven.

One can fancy the contemptuous look of a Greek, who imagined he had risen by philosophy above the follies of his day, as he heard of these believers forsaking idols for a God they had never seen, who did not shelter His own Son from death. What an occasion for the unbelieving Jew to snatch, as he would think, a triumph from these words, "Whom he raised from the dead." For he might tell that the One they called God's Son had owned on the cross that He was forsaken of God. Could the One forsaken of God on the cross save others from wrath? To all such taunts the Thessalonians had a ready answer. They had tasted of a joy of the Holy Ghost they had never known before; and the words they heard had a power which no mere word of man had or could have. Like the beggar of John ix., they could speak of something within the range of their own

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experience, and they knew Him for whom they now waited.

One word more. How this word "wait" manifests the simplicity of their faith ! All questions about sin were for them settled. All uncertainty about their future was removed. They knew He would come to judge the wicked; but they were sure of deliverance from the wrath to come, for they had received the word "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." To wait, not to work, for deliverance, was their business. The work by which salvation was secured was already finished. They were converted from idolatry and heathenism to wait for God's Son from heaven, who would take them to be in the glory with Himself. The first epistle speaks of the obtaining salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ (chap. v. 9); the second, of the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Chap. ii. 14.) Presumption, the Jew might have said, to be sure of this ! Presumption, many professing and indeed real Christians say in these days. It is presumption

## 76      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

to doubt instead of believing, to dispute God's testimony instead of resting on it. What an example, as well as a reproof, to souls in the present day, are these simple-minded converts from heathenism.

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### THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

#### LUKEWARMNESS.\*

SINCE the first decline of the Church, there is nothing that the saint should more fear, than anything bordering on lukewarmness; because that is the condition of the Church characteristically when it shall be spued out of Christ's mouth (Rev. iii. 16)—when it shall for ever cease to be for Him here on earth; and the moment we see anything in ourselves, tending to this lukewarmness, we should earnestly attend to His word, “be zealous and repent.” To do this, would be not only to refuse and denounce all neutrality, but to be valiant for the truth. Repentance does not only denounce the wrong, but it scrupulously

\* From *χλιαρος* (lukewarm). Rev. iii. 16.

## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 77

and earnestly arrests and maintains the right.

Now, the snare in lukewarmness is this, that there is nothing exactly to offend the conscience—there is no denial of, or opposition to, the truth; but, on the contrary, an apparent reception of it—a going along with it; but in such a partial, imperfect way, that a great deal is permitted which would have been refused, if one had been walking earnestly in the truth. There is an admission of truth, and there is an acceptance in general of the place in which the truth sets one, but there is no testimony to its power and control. The lukewarm one accepts the truth, and the position which the truth prescribes; but in such a loose way, that the sound is uncertain, and the distinctness and peculiarity, which would necessarily flow from an honest, earnest maintenance of the truth, is lost and frustrated. “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” Hence, there is more damage done to the truth than if it never had been accepted at all.

## 78      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

If it had not been accepted, there it would have remained; and it might be said, If it were, it would produce such and such effects; but when it has been accepted, and there is no true effect, because of the looseness or lukewarmness with which it is held, then the truth is compromised, and its value and efficacy practically denied. Just as if one should accept a physician's prescriptions and yet never use them, no effect would, of course, be produced on the patient; and the skill of the physician would be more compromised, than if his prescriptions had not been accepted. The Lord says, "I would that thou wert either cold or hot"—either not accepting at all, or accepting earnestly and vigorously; for then the truth is not compromised. What could please Satan more than to see saints holding truths which produced no effect? It would be a greater exultation to him in one sense than open infidelity, for it would tell more on believers, for thereby would be proved the powerlessness of the truth of God on the conscience. The great aim of Satan

## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

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is, that the word should “bring forth no fruit to perfection.” Bad enough when he can draw away and delude souls from yielding to the power of it; blinding their eyes, lest the light should shine unto them; but how much worse when he can succeed in making *saints* indifferent about the truth, making them lukewarm; causing them to treat the truth as if it were not of vital, eternal value. What could more effectually undermine the truth, than that one assenting to it, and accepting the position which it prescribed, should be as unaffected and uncontrolled by it, as if he had never heard it; nay, that he should slip into things under its cover, which he could not do with impunity, if he were not concealed under the garb of high profession? The apostle Paul warns Timothy of those who shall “have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof;” and in every time it has been the lukewarm who have brought the deepest shame and reproach on the people of God. Lukewarm is from cold to hot, but not hot enough. It is

80      **A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.**

one who asserts and accepts, but in a lifeless and indifferent way; holds on, as if there were no power or vitality in that which he holds; he has reached, but for no purpose, and has not turned it to account; in a word, it is the slothful man who will not roast that which he took in hunting. Ham was lukewarm. (Gen. iv. 22.) He saw in the person of his father the failure and apostasy in which he was involved, and felt no shame—took no steps to check or abate it; he was not zealous for the truth and position (that of government on the earth) in which they were set. He did not deny either, but he was not governed by any due sense of the gravity and responsibility of either, and he was accursed. Lot was lukewarm. (Gen. xiii.) He was in the land, but he was not zealous to maintain the claims of God on him in that position. Had he returned to Mesopotamia, he would have been a backslider; but he did not; he retained the position, but forewent the claims that belonged to it. The children of Israel were lukewarm when they

## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 81

made a league with the inhabitants of Canaan (Judges ii. 2), from which all their sorrows in the land sprung, as had been predicted. For 490 years, they were lukewarm in neglecting to keep the sabbatical year, for which they were carried into captivity. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.) Saul was lukewarm when he saved Agag king of the Amalekites (1 Sam. xv.), and thus forfeited the kingdom. The great and distinctive mark of the weakness of even the good kings of Israel, was, that they were lukewarm; the high places were not taken down. (1 Kings iii. 2; xv. 14, &c.) It was not so much what they had done, as what they had left undone. That man was lukewarm who said to our Lord, when called to follow Him, "Suffer me first to go and bid those farewell who are at home at my house." (Luke ix. 61.) He was lukewarm who said, "I go, sir, and went not." (Matt. xxi. 30.) All are lukewarm who, having put their hand to the plough, look back. (Luke ix. 62.) Peter was lukewarm when he separated from the Gentiles in the fear of man,



## 82      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

and “walked not according to the truth of the gospel.” (Gal. ii. 11—14.) Barnabas was lukewarm when he took with him Mark. (Acts xv. 37.) All in Asia were lukewarm when they turned away from Paul. (2 Tim. i. 15.) They had not turned away from Christianity, but they took the place which the mass of saints take now—owning Christ as Saviour, but overlooking Paul and the Church on earth in heavenly standing, power, and hope.

Now when the Church characteristically sinks into this indifference about truth—this open and avowed declaration of admission and acceptance of truth, without insisting on its claims and efficacy; it necessarily can no longer be in any way fit as a vessel for God on earth, and its removal from the place of testimony must immediately ensue; therefore it is in its Laodicean—its lukewarm—state, that it is spued out of Christ’s mouth, as that which is nauseous and useless. If Jeremiah could mourn in his day that there was none valiant for the truth how much more should we,

**THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY. 83**

when so much truth has been given us ! When the Church was first set up on earth as Christ's and of Him, it was the "pillar and ground of the truth;" and then no lukewarmness or indifference about anything of Christ, obtained in the Church. If there had, in any degree, then indeed all sense of its own proper dignity as the pillar and ground of truth—as of, and for, Christ here—would have been lost. And this has, alas ! been lost. We can no longer assume this dignity. But surely no saint would like to shew himself, because of his lukewarmness, unworthy and unfit for the dignity. Moreover, it is by the Spirit of truth that the Church is united to Christ the Head, and the members one to another; and if He be disregarded, where is the power to uphold us, or to guide us into all truth ? Surely, however fair the appearance may be, however we may say, "I am rich and increased with goods," we are hurrying on to an irretrievable catastrophe.

If any divine quality more than another ought to characterize a member of

## 84      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Christ, it is to be valiant for the truth; for he understands in himself the heart of Christ as expressed by the apostle, "I have no greater joy than that my children should walk in the truth." May we live so in His love, that it may be the joy of our hearts to walk here according to His mind in unswerving faithfulness to Him.

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## "THE HOUSE OF MOURNING."

(Eccles. vii. 2.)

WE do not *only* suffer with Christ or know His sufferings when we suffer in the way of persecution at the hands of the world. I believe there is a far larger class of sufferings than these, and in some sense deeper ones, in which He suffered and we suffer with Him. For instance, "He suffered, being *tempted*." To His pure and holy mind, in which there was nothing that could be drawn aside; nothing which could find complacency for the briefest instant on what was not of God. What a scene of trial

**“THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.” 85**

and suffering this world must have been! Not only when He got “hatred” for His “good will,” and when man whom He had come to serve pursued Him with reproach and enmity, did He suffer, but there was not a groan of suffering nature, out of joint and mangled by the tyranny of Satan, but He felt it. The unbelief of His own extracted from Him a groan which nothing else could. “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and suffer you!” Our hearts are at best so callous and so selfish that we can realize little of what the Lord’s path was through a world like this. But suppose we were confined to the wards of an hospital in which tortured humanity was before our eyes and its groans in our ears continually, or to a madhouse, where merriment was more sorrowful than sorrow, or to a jail, emptying itself continually by the gallows—not all these together could furnish forth the picture presented to His eye who could penetrate all the smoothness of external appearances and detect the reality of what was there.

## 86      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

And He has Himself pronounced the blessedness of "those that mourn," not in any particular case I believe; but who are *mourners*, whom that characterizes. He was a "man of sorrows," not of one merely, or some special form, but of sorrow in all its varied kinds. He could feel divinely, yet in the truth of a perfect manhood, every ache and pain on account of which creation groans; and, above all, there was not one pain that He relieved but it was the consequence of sin. They were the buds and fruits that grew upon that fatal tree, and the brightness of divine complacency in which He Himself walked, while it was His strength in passing through, only made Him yet more competent to feel the full extent to which man had departed from Him.

Thus there is not a sorrow which we can feel as *the result of being ourselves nigh to God and in the midst of what is contrary to Him*, but it is the "fellowship of Christ's sufferings." The naked evil of the world, the poor Church spoiled of her ornaments and exposed to the

## “THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.” 87

contempt of those to whom she ought to have been a light and witness, yea the very sorrows and miseries of men in any shape ought to be our grief who are the vessels of grace and of the riches of divine love.

But among these things I believe we cannot reckon the things which come upon us as being in the body. There, suffering from disease is not suffering with Christ surely. Ay, but is there therefore no blessedness in it? Oh yes, for it is the pressing of the grape into the cup, that it may yield its sweetness to the weary.

“We have this treasure in *earthen vessels*” truly. Is there any glory in an earthen vessel? Yes: this, “that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.” Is that nothing? “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the *life also* of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” Now this

## 88      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

is where we can see blessedness. Even sickness may make more manifest the life of Christ. "Death" working in us (other than by persecution) may make the power of Christ so manifest that "life" may "work in" others as the result of it. The thorn in the flesh in Paul's case was not suffering with Christ, for *He* could never have needed such a thing. But yet Paul gloried in it as that manifested "the power of Christ;" yea, which *made* it "rest on" him as a consciously weak one. For our strength this our real "infirmity," and our "infirmities" are strength. "When I am weak, then am I strong."

God delights in our difficulties. Would that we had faith to do so too. He delights in shewing what the strength of His arm is, and what the love of His heart. He could have taken Israel out of Egypt by the way of the Philistines, but He would not. He must take them to the sea, and hedge them up between the mountains, and bring Pharaoh and his hosts up behind—and for what? Did He delight in their

## “THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.” 89

fears? In no wise. But they needed the lesson, and what a lesson it was! One constant one of “love.” “He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” We come into trial and it searches us, and we get afraid, and He says, “Fear not, it is I.” I am but teaching you the lesson of how you may confide in me. I want you to be perfect in this lesson of love, and to learn it is the way to be promoted to teach other scholars, and “God comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in *any* trouble, with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” Should it seem hard, after He has left his grapes mellowing for awhile in the blessed sunshine, that He should press them into His cup, that the wine may cheer God and man? Cheer God! Oh, we do not think of what a Father’s heart feels when He is able to say of us, I can do with him anything I will, and he will not murmur. “That the trial of your faith, being *much more precious* than of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire,



may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ;" and faith, though tried, shall never be ashamed; no, not for anything. How sure it is! How simple it ought to be! Christ has sanctified trouble. How can I refuse it? His cross, as I practically learn it, sweetens the bitter waters for me. The darkness is but love in mystery, as the light is only manifested love. If we knew more what faith meant, we should say of trouble before us, Now is He going to teach me more of His love;" and of difficulty, He is going to make His power known. Any way, after He has passed, if we have not discerned it before, we now know that it is Himself. Perhaps we must of necessity have been in the sorrowfully to know that sunburst of joy afterwards. What it will be to stand at the end of all and see our course and God's dealings with us! Thus how (if by the way He does not care to justify Himself) will the end justify Him! and that is a low word. How it will *glorify* Him! Meanwhile we walk by the faith

of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. If we know not always His *way*, we have what is better; for we know Himself.

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## THE RIGHT PATH, AND THE LIGHT IN IT.

THERE are certain universal characteristics of faith under given circumstances. The characters under which Christ is revealed to each Church in Revelation ii., iii., refers to the claims of faith from that Church, and this faith gets its encouragement in the character in which Christ is revealed. In all circumstances faith connects itself directly with Christ, learns Christ, and walks by that which it learns. The proper christian position is in distinct liberty of heart with the Father, the full spirit of adoption consequent on the completion of redemption. We get the character of faith, by which the heart is encouraged to look at the promises made in connection with the path we are iound in. Christ's

## 92      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

faithful care and patient grace, that grace which overcomes, is just the same now.

The character of Christ which is presented to the Philadelphians is the "*holy and the true.*" Amid vast pretensions of every kind, we have to do with Him that is holy and true. People talk about truth, but they have not *the* truth, *the truth as it is in Jesus*. If I have the truth, everything else can be judged by it. *Christ Himself is the truth*. He shews me all God's mind. From Him I have the certainty of all that is of heaven, and the judgment of all that is of the world. There may be uncertainty in circumstances; but I have the certain, settled, established truth of God. I know I have got the truth by which everything else can be judged. Christ revealed is the truth—"He that is holy." If I am walking in practical holiness with the Lord (and it is said, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord"), none can make me afraid. It is with Him that is *holy* I have to do; and the character with which I walk with Him must be practical holiness.

## THE RIGHT PATH, ETC.

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“He that hath the key of David,” that is, the One who manages the house of God. I can count on Him. He opens, all the world cannot shut; He shuts, who can open? But in order to have the certainty of the enjoyment of this, I must watch my ways, and pass judgment on all that is contrary to Him. If I am walking in practical holiness with One who is *the* Truth, who opens and none can shut, I can walk in simple fearlessness. Leaning on Him, no matter what the circumstances, I can walk on; I have nothing to fear. There may be opposition, and there will be, where there is faith, but I leave all to Him who opens and no man shuts; and here is a thorough test of thorough-going faith. “*I know thy works,*” He says, and you must be content with *my* knowing.” He does not tell what they are. Nothing so tests the heart as the question, “Are you content, in walking with Christ, that He knows *all*! Nothing of display, no great results looked for, the heart completely content that He knows your work.” If it be thus with

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you, all your motives must be perfectly right; for it is in proportion as you walk with Him that all your motives are detected. Who knew Christ thus on earth? *Not one*, only the Father; and He was content with His Father knowing all, and with knowing Him. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." "Hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." This is what He approves of — all service and labour having reference to Christ, and for this He opens the door. To keep His word may shut you up in a corner; but you have the approbation which alone you care for. Holding by Christ, I am in the light, and man cannot puzzle me. A man may reason and puzzle his neighbour, but if I am walking in God's light, he will never puzzle me out of that. His word kept, Himself known, He takes the heart out of the region of darkness, into the region of light. It is not to get light *upon* the word. The word is the light. When I have got Christ, I find Him in every page. I do

“WHEN HE HAD GIVEN THANKS.” 95

not want light to see the sun by; the sun is the light, and I shall see it if I have eyes. Then He says, “I have loved thee.” If you are satisfied with that, you have what takes away the craving of the human heart. Christ loves you. “Thou hast kept the word of my patience.” How closely He connects the heart with Himself! He is waiting—I must wait.

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“WHEN HE HAD *GIVEN THANKS* HE  
BRAKE IT.”

O blessed Lord! we greet Thee now,  
Our hearts are unto Thee;  
E'en as those gathered round Thee once—  
Thy chosen company.

E'en now, as in Thy night of woe,  
Thy heart speaks home to each;  
And unto Thee, from every soul,  
Responsive breathings reach.

*Without*—betrayed, cast out by man,  
Who loved his misery:  
*Within*—Thine own are called to taste  
Of fellowship with Thee.

O love, how deep, how infinite!  
It spans all time and space;

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Enwraps Thy loved ones to the end  
In its encircling grace.

Thou, blessed Jesus, couldst give thanks,  
E'en with that cross in view,  
Which broke for us Thine every link  
With earth and nature too.

What triumph in Thine accents, Lord;  
O ! may we catch the strain,  
And echo from our hearts to Thee,  
Responsive thanks again.

Thanks, that this earth no more can claim  
One look, one thought, from us:  
For Thou hast died to all things here,  
And we announce it thus:

Announce Thy death till Thou return,  
No more to grieve or die.  
"Remember me," Thy parting word;  
"Amen," our hearts reply.

In life and glory linked with Thee,  
We own no place below,  
Save that which links us with Thy death,  
Whence life and glory flow.

And thus, O blessed Lord, we learn  
What joy Thy presence gives ;  
Outside of everything in Thee,  
*With* Thee the spirit lives.

With Thee, apart from all things here,  
We worship,—we adore ;  
While pleasures at our God's right hand,  
Flow round us evermore.

# PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

## PART II.

### THE EVANGELIST.

#### 1 Thess. ii. 1—12.

THE Lord Jesus Christ, having ascended up on high and led captivity captive, has given gifts to men. “And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” (Eph. iv. 8, 11.) Nothing is more marked often than the difference of gifts the Lord’s people have received. Some are at home in teaching, and evidently have no gift for evangelizing. Some are true evangelists, with little, if any, aptitude for teaching. The sphere for these two gifts is quite distinct. The evangelist works in the world, the teacher labours among the saints. So in Ephesians, where gifts to men are spoken of, both evangelists and teachers are enumerated; whereas in 1 Corinthians xii., where what God hath set in the assembly is stated, evangelists are unnoticed. We should observe likewise



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the order in which in Ephesians these gifts are arranged. First come those who had special authority from the Lord, then those to whom, in common with apostles, revelations were vouchsafed. God's mind having been revealed, we have next those who should go out and announce it to the world; and then, when souls have been converted, the individual work of the shepherd, and the more general labour of the teacher, are needed. For the teacher to exercise his special gift, there must be souls gathered into the Church. For the evangelist to work, there needs unsaved sinners to be reached.

A happy, blessed service is that of the evangelist. Himself a gift from the Lord to men, he must be qualified by the Holy Ghost for his work. As God's herald he takes his stand in the world and announces the good news (i. e., gospel) of salvation to sinners for *all* who will receive it. It is not a partial amnesty that he is commissioned to promulgate, nor is it a mere pardon, however graciously conceded, that he is

sent out to declare. He speaks of pardon, but of justification also. He speaks of deliverance from wrath, but he speaks of everlasting blessedness likewise. The threshold of hell shall never be crossed by those who give heed to, and rest in, what he proclaims; and the door of heaven, he is empowered to say, has been opened to receive all who believe. The wrath of God is averted, because His Son has endured it for sinners; and the favour of God can be enjoyed, because those who believe are now accepted in the Beloved. Beautiful on the mountains will be the feet of them that bring good tidings, that publish peace; that bring good tidings of good, that publish salvation; that shall say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth. (Isaiah lii. 7.) Beautiful too now, not on the mountains simply (i.e., those which surround Jerusalem, Psalm cxxv. 2), but on earth, in valley, plain, hill, city, on shore or at sea, are those who proclaim the gospel of peace, till the Lord shall descend into the air. The Spirit of God in Isaiah looks for-

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ward to that future in store for Zion and rejoices. The Spirit of God, we learn from the Romans (chap. x. 15), delights in the proclamation of the gospel of peace now. "But how shall they preach except they be sent?" Then none can take up this service unless they have been sent to discharge it. "Except they be sent" implies a call, and supposes a fitness in the individual for the work. God must call the individual, man cannot. Man may own that the labourer has received a call. He ought to do this, but the call is from God to the evangelist. Paul was called of God. (Gal. i. 15, 16; ii. 7.) Paul and Barnabas were separated by the saints at Antioch to the Holy Ghost for the work of missions to which He had called them. (Acts xiii. 2.) The hands of the prophets and teachers having been laid on them, they went forward to their work, "sent forth by the Holy Ghost." And those called for this work are those specially adapted for such a service. Let any one of God's children, not qualified for evangelizing,

## PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY. 101

try it, and he will at length give it up, feeling himself unfitted for it.

Paul was an evangelist, as well as an apostle and teacher. In him we can trace what those qualities are which an evangelist, chosen of God, will surely in some measure possess. Paul had a burning desire for souls. Do we not, in our day, see some who possess this likewise, a thirst (is that too strong a word?) for the salvation of their fellow creatures? Paul, as an evangelist, fulfilled his work as directly responsible to God. "A dispensation was committed unto him." "Woe is unto me," he writes to the Corinthians, "if I preach not the gospel." Would he allow others to control him, or did he seek to control others in this service? Nothing of the kind do we read of. From those at Jerusalem, who seemed to be somewhat, he received nothing but the right hand of fellowship. They could add nothing to him. They did not even mark out his sphere, or define its limits. From God he received his call, and He assigned him his field of labour. And

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right well did he cultivate it; for from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of Christ, previous to his imprisonment at Jerusalem, and subsequent voyage as a prisoner to Rome. In the Acts we get an outline of his labour, but in the epistles we learn more of the spirit by which he was actuated.

He writes to the Thessalonians about his labour as an evangelist among them. (1 Thess. ii.) At Philippi he had suffered imprisonment with Silas, their feet fast bound in the stocks, in addition to the many stripes previously laid on them by direction of the magistrates; yet this did not damp their ardour. Their love to souls burned still in their bosoms. Well might he speak of shameful treatment at Philippi; yet they were bold in their God to speak to souls at Thessalonica. For they carried with them a message of great concern—the gospel of God. Could they be silent whatever it might cost? Impossible. In much contention at Thessalonica they declared it. Neither the past, nor the probable

consequences of their boldness for the future, could shut their mouths. Where natural courage would have given way they were bold in God to preach His gospel.

In much contention they proclaimed the truth at Thessalonica. For our exhortation, he writes, was not of deceit nor of uncleanness. They addressed themselves to neither the mind nor the flesh of the natural man. Had they done that, much of the opposition they met with would have been avoided. Neither did they approach them in guile to cloak over their real object. All with them was open. They had a message to deliver, and they delivered it. Cost them what it might, however unpalatable it might be to Jew or Gentile, they were determined to preach, not what man would receive, but what God had committed to them. Approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, they spoke, not as pleasing men, but God who proves the heart. Flattering words would have been out of place with such. In earnest, and fully sensible

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of the truth confided to them, they could not act with any thought for themselves. Neither flattery by which to find acceptance with others, nor covetousness to further their own ends, could they resort to. Entrusted with God's truth, they could not be anything but truthful. As stewards they could not seek their own things; and, whatever others might think of them, they could call God to witness to the sincerity and simplicity of their desires among them. In no form was self allowed a place when preaching the gospel. For neither among them or others would they stand on their rights as apostles, seeking glory and distinction from their converts. On the contrary, they were gentle (or, as some would read, simple) among them, as a nurse cherisheth her children. The patience, the gentleness of a nurse cherishing her children, was the fitting illustration to use. What real feeling this describes! They were men of heart, whose tender affection could stand a great deal of trial from their converts. And this affection was something so new

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to witness; new too, surely, for the descendants of Abraham to entertain towards Gentiles after the flesh, so that the apostle uses a word by which to express it, not met with elsewhere in the New Testament. Or, if we follow the reading adopted by some of the best critics, he uses a word not met with at all in classical Greek, but found in the LXX. translation of Job. Their singular affection for souls he would express by an unusual word.\* And the length to which they were prepared to go for these poor converts from heathenism was great. Their delight would have been to impart, not the gospel of God only, but also their own lives, because they were beloved by them. And to manifest this, they supported themselves, working night and day, not to be chargeable to any of them. Freely would they preach the gospel, even if it cost them much physical toil to supply their wants. So at Ephesus he acted on another occasion

\* *ἡμειρόμενοι*, according to Textus Receptus; *δμειρόμενοι*, according to Lachmann and Tischendorf.



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(Acts xx. 34), supporting himself and those with him. Yet if friends from a distance ministered to their necessities he accepted it. (Phil. iv. 15, 16.) What loving affection, genuine warmheartedness, does all this manifest!

As a nurse he had tended them, as a father with his children he exhorted each one of them; comforting, and testifying that they should walk worthy of God who called them to His own kingdom and glory. What care for their walk does this display! The nurse tends the little ones, the father has to provide for the nurture or training of his own. (Ephes. vi. 4.) As his children he regarded them. With all the affection of a father he exhorted them. For he could not rest satisfied with a shallow superficial work. He could not be with them, and accept simply an assent to the truths he had preached. The work must be deep to satisfy him; the change manifest, ere he could rest contented. Called to God's own kingdom and glory, they must walk here worthy of it, if they would gladden the heart of their

spiritual father. So when writing to the Galatians, who seemed slipping away from truth, he said, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. iv. 19.) It was a Person he presented, a life he desired them to receive, not a mere scheme of doctrine. So that life should be manifested, Christ should be formed in them, they should walk worthy of God. Paul desired nothing less than this. What evangelist could rest short of it?

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## RESTORATION.

RESTORATION, as every saint knows, is needed every time the heart deviates from that path in which a good conscience is assured, according to faith; and includes at least a return to that point from which it had deviated. It is that distinct revolution which grace effects, in the soul of one who has departed from godliness. The extent of the departure is more than measured by the return;

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and because it is the triumph of grace, the restored one is morally greater, though personally humbled.

The beginning of all departure from God is very small, and never of a character to awaken fear, except in the one who feels, that instead of a growing nearness to the Lord, there has arisen a sense of distance and reserve. There is no open departure, so long as conscience continues to distress, and to re-assert its claims, for its claims are for God; and so long as there is conscience concerning the faith, there is not shipwreck.

The restoration of one who has actually fallen, or who has wandered, is now our subject. Restoration, as the word imports (see Luke xxii. 32\*), means a recovery from that state and place into which one had lapsed. Now the uncurbed desire, however small, which led to the first wrong, is the point of departure; and therefore the beginning, the bud of all the evil and shame which followed. Hence it

\* Convert, ἐπιστρέφω, to return back, as one returns to health after an illness.

is said, "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." There is no saint who has judged himself before God, but he must have been shocked and confounded at seeing the way he excuses himself when his self-gratification is in question, and what snares he has escaped through the unfailing mercy of God. If all could see the end of the path they at times are so easily seduced into, they would, because the conscience was then active, turn from it in fear and horror. "In vain is the net set in the sight of any bird." But no! there is at first a *looking* on the wine when it is red. (Prov. xxiii. 31.) There is an inclination and a purpose to please oneself. A man is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed. We yield but *slightly* at first, just as much as the conscience will consent to. In some shape or form, the first step is making provision for the flesh, and once in the downward path, the Lord permits such an one to fall, until he is awakened by some enormity to his evil in departing from the living

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God. And then, he has not merely to judge the sin, however great, into which he has sunk (that is comparatively easy, because it is so glaring); but he must, before he starts in power and truth, review his course to the first step of his departure. He may have to go a great way back to discover this step; but evidently there is no true restoration until the first step be retraced, nor can the vantage ground of grace be reached. So that if the course of evil be a protracted one, and if many and various enormities have marked it, it will not do to renounce even all of them. The restoration cannot be genuine or effective, unless there be a retracing to that point where the evil began, and there a triumph over its first desire. The great delay and hindrance to restoration is the reluctance to judge the *root* whence the entire course of evil sprang, and to be occupied instead with some of its sad and bitter products. We do not sufficiently feel the wickedness of departing *in heart* from the living God; but we are all shocked when we find

## RESTORATION.

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what it ends in. Now it is not what it ends in that I am to be recovered from, but from the first desire in the evil course, which has ended in an exposure of my shame. We too often forget that he is as guilty before God who offends in one point, and that even the least, as he who offends in all. The evil is there, and the source of the evil is the point at which restoration must commence. We can see in ourselves *when* we turned our eyes around to find something besides Christ. Surely that was the point of departure, and all the evil and bitter fruits which grew out of that bud might be repudiated and separated from, and yet the bud might continue and produce a still more fearful crop than that now denounced and repented of. While conscience remains, we see where we are drifting to; but the mistake is, that we think to satisfy our conscience by repenting of the excesses we have fallen into, instead of judging the root from which it all springs. The root is the desire to please self, to seek for something here to contribute to self.

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Self is our object and not Christ, and the more we know, and the higher our conception, of what it is to follow Christ has been, the more grievous will be our fall and disgrace.

Where conscience is not entirely surrendered, there will be (for the Lord is very pitiful) a deliverance out of the snare of the fowler; but it will be felt and known as a snare from which one has escaped. This is when the conscience is in exercise, though with a desire to indulge oneself as far as one can, while retaining a fear of God in the heart.

In the case of the Nazarite (Num. vi.) we get, in type, the moral action attendant on restoration. We read (ver. 6), "All the days that he separateth himself to the Lord, he shall come at no dead body." But in verse 9, the case of his having defiled the head of his consecration is supposed; and then it is said, "he shall *shave his head* in the day of his cleansing," &c. (ver. 9—12); but the *days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.*

## RESTORATION.

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If the Nazarite came near any dead body (the extent is not alluded to), his consecration was defiled, and he must shave his head, and the days that were before were lost. The proximity of death was enough to defile the Nazarite, even though the death had occurred very “suddenly,” and he must begin anew, from the point where separation in grace began. The days that were before are lost, and his hair shaven as indicative of the depth and distinctness of his repentance.

Thus, we see in Abram, when he returns to Canaan out of Egypt (Gen. xiii. 4), he comes “to the place of the altar, which he had made there at *the first*.” It is evident that he was not without some exercise of conscience while he was in Egypt, but he counted all the days he had been there as lost, and recommenced his sojourn in Canaan at the point whence his journeyings from it began, and “where his tent had been at the beginning.” How different was it with Lot! First sojourning in the plains of Sodom, eventually dwell-



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ing there. Had he been truly restored when rescued from Sodom, he would have returned to that point, where he first yielded to the lust of his heart in choosing the plains of Sodom, and there stood in victory over his self-seeking. No doubt he repented of living in Sodom; but he is never seen as restored; and, on the contrary, was only rescued from one fall, to be hurried into another. (Gen. xix.) This is very sad! David falls grievously, and it is long before his conscience is awakened to a sense of his guilt; but when it is, if Psalm li. describes his state, he reviews the state of his soul, which paved the way for such a fall. He cries, "Against thee —thee only—have I sinned" And again: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." What an exercise and revolution to the soul, when after a protracted course of wandering, it returns to the point of departure, triumphant over it; and, like the Nazarite, declares all that was before, to be lost; and, like Abram, begins

again where it had begun long before ! Thus it was with Peter ; he is suddenly taken in a snare, for which his self-confidence had paved the way, and he falls ! Repentance ensues ; but this must not be confined to mere sorrow of heart for his fall, however great the sorrow, or bitter the tears. (Luke xxii. 62.) The Lord will exercise his soul as to the *root* from which the fall had sprung. So He presses on him the question, “ Lovest thou me more than these ? ” (John xxi.) That was touching the spring—the beginning of Peter’s failure ; viz., self-confidence, and on this very point his heart must be probed. He must go back to the *beginning* ; he must shave off all his hair ; the days that were before must be lost ; he must see the bud from whence so much evil can spring, and having judged it, and risen in grace above it, he is fully restored. Esau found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. It was not that he was not repentant of the one act, but he could not in heart retrace and refuse all he had done ; he could not repudiate

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self. True repentance is to repudiate self as *God repudiates* it; nay, more; I never have a true estimate of my flesh, or of the gulf between it and God, until I see the cross of Christ as the measure of this gulf, and with the darkness of that awful judgment passing over my soul, I loathe, and in horror shrink from, that in myself which in righteousness entailed on Him so great a judgment.

A restored soul not only retraces the distance it has departed from God, but stands, a victor through grace, above the point where it had first departed from Him. The heart returns to be with God, and the evidence of the restoration is (like the Nazarite shaving off his hair) the distinctness with which he repents and begins, as it were, anew—begins with God, with the sacrifices of a broken spirit; not (as I have already said) at the point immediately preceding the open evil, but at that in which his eye first turned from God to self. At that moment the dead body was touched—he was defiled, and *back to this he must go*, to begin where grace began. But

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this being done truly, the soul is restored, is able to go on with God, because it is near Him, and has found its place in grace, purged from sin and all uncleanness, in Christ, in whom the old man was crucified, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

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THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.

THE value of light is to display what exists: more than that it cannot declare; but if I am in the light, I shall see what exists. Hence, when the light shines, the question of interest is, What does it declare?

The light of the gospel displays all that has been accomplished by Christ. It takes its rise from the glory of God—from the consummation of Christ's work; not from the beginning of His work, but from the climax of it. The light from thence, sent of God into the

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soul, illuminates Christ's *whole course*, and comprises His whole work, from His first descent from the glory, to His ascension in glory. The light now is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ; now, for the first time, light can come to us from the glory. The light declares the relation in which God is to the believer. It declares His relation to me, rather than my title to this relation. It declares God; but as it is received, it assures my heart, in the disclosures it makes of His grace, both the way of it, and of my title to it. If I have not this light, it is evident that I cannot understand His relation to me, or my relation to Him. The light is from God, and unfolds Him. The Father's heart and purpose of love to the prodigal are disclosed. This is the object and purpose of the light, and doubtless it fixes and assures the heart in every step of the blessing; but its object is to declare the Father. It *shines into* the heart of the prodigal; but it does not *spring* there. It springs from God (see 2 Cor. iv. 6), and this it is of

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all importance to remember. It springs from God to declare Himself in His grace to the sinner, shewing the sinner how he is elevated to the highest position, but occupying his heart with the *source* of the light, rather than with the *effects* of it on himself. If he be occupied with the effects on himself, the main object of the light is lost sight of, and the soul sustains damage and loss. Now, I am necessarily occupied with its effects on me, if I regard the light as merely a gift, like a lamp, confined to myself, rather than to declare Him from whom it springs. The mistake, and the consequent loss to souls at the present hour, is, not that they do not believe in Christ, but that they do not enjoy the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. Nor is it duly proclaimed.

I suppose no student of scripture would deny, that our blessed Lord was offered to Israel to bring in the sure mercies of David, after His ascension to glory; that He was rejected in the person of Stephen, and that, instead of re-

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turning to earth in glory, His servant and witness Stephen was killed here, and taken to be with Him in glory. Up to this point, the gospel did not go beyond the fact that Christ had risen, and would return to earth in glory. He had not been, as yet, finally rejected, nor as yet, had He taken His place in heaven consequent on His rejection. He could not offer Himself to Israel, and at the same time be seated definitely in heaven. But on His final rejection by Israel, He takes Stephen to be with Him in glory; and after this, Saul is called out, and the light displays to him Christ in glory. His first acquaintance with Christ is in the glory. He sees Him there, not offering Himself to Israel, but identifying Himself with the Church. From henceforth, it is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. The action of it in the soul is, as Paul expresses it, "to reveal his Son in me." God now sends a light from His own glory into the soul, declaring that His Son has perfected everything according to His mind, and that from

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the very brightness of His presence, He can disclose to a poor prodigal the depths of His heart. The light tells, not what He will do or what He is doing, but that which *is done*—the finish, the consummation. From the climax, it issues at the command of the same mighty One who had said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” It shoots from the centre of glory into the soul, disclosing the wondrous fact, through the Spirit, of the establishment of righteousness; that the righteousness is the warrant for its issue; that God’s own Son has met in judgment all that God required; that on the cross He had endured the wrath of God, and had converted the ministry of condemnation of Mount Sinai into the ministry of righteousness from the glory that remaineth. In the one, the glory was fatal to him who approached near the mount; but in the other, because Christ has borne the judgment and is now raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and ascended to His right hand, God can, by His own mighty creative



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power, cause light to shine into the soul and disclose to it that glory is not only the place of our Saviour, but that in Him *there* is the beginning, the birth-place of our new standing before God. There the blessed God is in the zenith of His grace toward man. He never was so till now; and from thence it is that He sends the light into the soul. Glory either exacts from me, or it imparts to me. It exacts, if I have no link to it; for then I must think of myself in relation to it, and this is legality; but if I have a link to it, it imparts to me, and I am of it, and separate from all that is not of it.

The smallest ray that ever penetrated the dark heart of man since the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, has sprung by the command of the Almighty from His own presence, where righteousness in all its strength is presented and maintained by Jesus Christ His Son, who cleanseth us from all sin, and who is charged with tidings of the deep purposes of God's love to us; and the soul, in any little measure understanding this

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light, follows it to its source, and finds itself with Christ in glory. The beginning of its acquaintance with Him is *there*, and from *this* point it learns deeply and fully all His work and sufferings, and how He opened the way for us into such a scene of light and perfection. If I look at His work from the consummation of it, I must see, in its truest and fullest light, the whole course which led up to the consummation; therefore it necessarily follows that the glory must not only comprise the cross, but that from thence alone can I view and estimate the cross in its full magnitude. The light of this gospel, the gospel of the glory of Christ, speaks to a soul of Christ, *where* He has *finished* everything; and where Christ is thus received, the soul finds that its first acquaintance with Him is in the glory. It is where all is *finished* that there is sure rest for it, and abiding strength, because it looks up, and sees by faith from whence its acquaintance with Him comes; and that it is established in what God is in Himself, in relation *to* a man

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in Christ, and not merely in the effects of His grace *on* him, great as they are. What can establish and cheer my heart so much as the assurance of God's mind and relation toward me? I draw near Him in proportion as I know His mind and feelings towards me; and no message from His presence could effect so deep an assurance and joy in the heart, as the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God; for from henceforth, the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is my portion and privilege; and this imparts such a tone and character touching everything, that not only do our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; but we are so transformed by association with Christ in the glory, that all present things are superseded and supplanted in the heart. Everything is judged in relation to that glory which displaces and consumes all that is not *of it*, and allows only that which has been formed *in it*, and is consequently *for it*. If

## THE WILDERNESS OR CANAAN. 125

souls have not the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, they cannot adorn the gospel of Christ; but if they have, all that is of man is proportionately eclipsed, and Christ is testified of and expressed; while our portion in God is the unfailing joy of the heart.

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## THE WILDERNESS OR CANAAN.

JORDAN must be passed in order to enter God's inheritance. In the wilderness I learn dependence, and the greatness and minutiae of His thought and care for me; but, great as is the gain of knowing Him thus, in His own inheritance I know Him in a far higher, fuller way. It is *my* circumstances here: it is *His* circumstances there. From *thence* it is, that God is now, by His Spirit, ministering righteousness by and in Him who has accomplished it and who is there; so that glory, where the Saviour is, and from whence all righteousness proceeds, becomes our proper place.

But why is it that we are not more oc-

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cupied with the glory? What conduces—paves the way for our being so? Now the answer to this question is that *we must be in Christ completely, before we can be in the place where He is fully.* In Colossians ii., the apostle first shews our completeness in Christ, as filling up everything; and next, the completeness of our renunciation of ourselves, both in circumcision (the “putting off the body of the flesh”) and in baptism (death). There is nothing we are so slow in attaining as the complete renunciation of ourselves, and hence the difficulty; for when completely out of ourselves, it is easy to be nothing else but completely in Christ, and *vice versa*. Now for the practical attainment of this complete acceptance of Christ and complete renunciation of self, which is God’s purpose for us, two things are necessary: one, to walk in a good conscience; and the other, to walk in communion with the Lord by the Spirit. A good conscience is not enough. A person may do many things with a good conscience, who could not say he is walking in com-

## THE WILDERNESS OR CANAAN. 127

munion with the Lord, though communion must necessarily comprise a good conscience; for it is fellowship through the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son; as the apostle speaks of the Holy Ghost bearing him witness *with his conscience*. The conscience is my intelligence of what is required of God; and therefore, the more lively it is, the more it will seek to apprehend what He enjoins; hence, the word penetrates me through the conscience (Heb. iv. 12); but this is *not* communion, though it leads to communion. The conscience yielding itself to the action of the word, leads me, through Christ in His sympathy, to the throne of grace. But communion is a step farther; where, in the light, I know that He has not only washed my feet, but wiped them; that there is cloudless intimacy between Him and me. I am with Him, *where He is*; not seeking to rise above my badness, but parting with everything, even what is good in man, to be in Him—to “*win Christ*.” (Phil. iii.) This is to be *completely in Christ and out of myself*—to

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know the glory as my proper place. It may be brought about in various modes of education: sometimes, by every desirable thing coming to an end here. Paul *caught the idea* of it at his conversion. The light of the glory blinded him; and (like Isaac Newton after gazing on the sun) he became blind *morally*, as he was *actually* at first, to everything but the “*one thing*”—Christ in glory. Abraham loses his Isaac; David, his Jerusalem; Jonah, his gourd; Paul is shut up in prison; all nature is put out, and Christ becomes the one distinct object to the soul; and then I am in full fellowship with God’s mind. The eternal life opens out its virtues and its engagements to me. I rejoice in Christ Jesus. I am “holding the Head.” The *place* where *He is*, occupies and fills the vision of my soul. I worship Him, and my joy is full.

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I cannot be in communion but as I understand the mind of the Lord. I cannot be near Him but as I know I am loved by Him.

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# PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

## PART III.

### THE WORK OF THE EVANGELIST.

“OTHER sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd.” (John x. 16.) In such terms does the Lord Jesus announce the great change which would be effected consequent on His death and resurrection. Sheep He had which did not belong to the fold of Israel. He was, He is, in a special sense (see Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Zech. xiii. 7) the Shepherd of Israel. But He has other sheep whom He would bring, and they should hear His voice; and thus following Him, as did the believing remnant of Israel, the two would form one flock, owning, and cared for by, the one Shepherd. This explains a passage in 1 Corinthians x., where the children of men on the earth are divided now into three classes, the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God. Before the Lord’s death there were but two classes



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on the earth—the Jews and the Gentiles. So when the Lord in John vii. stated that whither He would go they could not follow Him, reasoning among themselves the Jews said: “Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?” There were then but Jew and Gentile on the earth. By and by it will be the same. After the Church has been caught up to meet the Lord in the air the human family will again be divided into these two classes, and these only, Jew and Gentile.

Now this third class exists on the earth, the Church of God. It was this class, as distinct from Jews and Gentiles but composed of those who had been once Jews, that Paul persecuted. “I persecuted the Church of God.” It was this class, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, that the Jews endeavoured to exterminate. (1 Thess. ii. 14.) And it is in the midst of the churches that the Lord Jesus Christ is said to walk as Son of man, taking special cognizance of all that goes on in them. (Rev. ii.) Moreover in the Church, God, in the

## PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY. 131

person of the Holy Ghost, now dwells. (Eph. ii. 22.) It is God's house (1 Tim. iii. 15.) God's temple. (1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16.)

In early days the "within" and the "without" (1 Cor. v. 12, 13; Col. iv. 5) were terms understood, and limits clearly defined, by all believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. Within were all who professed to be, and as far as man could judge were, believers on the Lord. Without, were all who had not taken christian ground. Within, was the sphere in which the Spirit of God ruled and dwelt; without, was the region where the god of this world had sway. To put from among believers a wicked man was to place him for the time outside the region of the Church, and in the world where Satan had power.

Brought out of Judaism by the preaching of the gospel, those who were to be saved of Israel found themselves members of God's assembly or Church on the earth—a position quite distinct from that which the nation had; the Church or assembly being spoken of as,

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a company apart from their countrymen, the Jews at Jerusalem. (Acts v. 11.) Brought out of heathenism by the preaching of the same word, believers from among the Gentiles found themselves members of the same assembly—the Church. A common bond united them, a common interest occupied them. They were partakers of the same life. They owned the same Lord, and were united to the same Head in heaven. Children of the same Father, indwelt by the same Spirit, they were one in the Lord, forming the Church of Christ, the house of God, the habitation of the Holy Ghost. And wherever the gospel was preached in Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, those who believed formed part of the Church. Philip preached in Samaria, the apostles Peter and John evangelized many villages of the Samaritans (Acts viii.), and soon after we read of the Church existing in Samaria. (ix. 31.) Souls at Antioch in Syria were evangelized by those scattered abroad upon the persecution which arose about Stephen, and

shortly afterwards we read of the assembly in that city. (xi. 19, 26.) Paul and his fellow labourers visited Thessalonica, the first evangelists in that country, and but little time elapsed before the converts received a communication addressed “to the Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Wherever souls received the glad tidings which Paul preached, churches sprang up; and as Paul and Barnabas returned from Derbe to Antioch in Syria, they appointed elders in the churches previously formed by their evangelistic labours. But whilst apostolic power or authority was requisite for the appointment of elders, none being appointed to that office except by the apostles or their delegates in primitive times, it needed not an apostle or authority from one, for churches to spring up in different localities. There was a church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla at Rome before Paul or any other apostle had visited that city. (Rom. xvi. 6.) There were churches at

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Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, souls gathered out by Epaphras and others whom Paul had never seen. (Col. ii. 1, iv. 15; Phil. ii.) To call souls out of the world into the Church was the work of the evangelist. Hence there was a twofold result of his labours. Souls were gathered out of the world, delivered from the power of darkness, rescued from a condition of wrath, having passed from darkness to light through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ; and believers, thus brought out of Judaism and heathenism, were brought of necessity into the Church of God. There could be no other place for them, there is no other division of men on earth recognized of God, but the Jew, and Gentile, and Church of God. Ceasing to be a Jew or a Gentile by becoming a Christian, the individual forms part of the Church. The evangelist might not teach them much about the Church, its composition, its government, its position with reference to principalities and powers in heavenly places now. All that would follow afterwards, being the

more direct work of the teacher set by God in the assembly; but his preaching made them take a new place on earth, i.e., brought them openly into God's assembly. They had heard the voice of Christ, and forthwith became members of the one flock.

To form *a* church was not their aim. God had formed *the* Church by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. If they laboured in a place where none had laboured before, all the souls called out in that place formed the Church of God in that locality. In a country there might be many churches, as in Galatia. (Gal. i. 2.) In any locality there was but one Church of God, as at Corinth. (1 Cor. i. 1.) How differently do evangelists often act in these days. We hear of souls brought to the Lord, and then left to shift for themselves, to choose the denomination to which they will be attached. This is called liberality of sentiment, the catholic principle on which the work should be carried on. The salvation of individuals is all that is aimed at here, to bring them to Jesus

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is the avowed end of such labourers. Blessed be God, however we may fall short of His thought, He never fails His people. Saved by grace through faith, we are, whether conscious of it or not, quickened with Christ, raised up with Him, and seated in Him in the heavenlies; we are members of His body, part of His Church. But such teaching as is often met with ignores the Church of God, and keeps out of sight, or overlooks, some of the distinguishing characteristics of the present interval between the day of Pentecost and the Lord's descent into the air.

If by faith in Christ we become members of the one flock, the one Church of God, there should be uniformity and harmony of action. Each one of the children of Israel had to observe the same rules, and was bound to worship God in the same way. So each member of Christ should know what God's directions and regulations for His Church are. In ignorance surely of what the Church of God is, earnest, godly, souls, feeling the need of

uniformity, have devised rules for all such as will agree in some special doctrine or church question with themselves. Hence the formation of so-called churches, composed of some, not all, the members of *the* Church in any one place. Hence too, the varied forms of church government and worship. Paul at Corinth would have nothing to do with the divisions there, save only to correct such evils. He did not form a church of all those who followed him, to the exclusion of those who were attached to Apollos, or Cephas, or some other teacher. All who believed at Corinth were members of God's Church there, they were all God's husbandry, God's building, the temple of God. Was he indifferent about uniformity in order and worship? He insisted strongly on it. He sent Timotheus to remind them of his ways which were in Christ, as he taught everywhere in every church. (1 Cor. iv. 17.) As regards marriage, he ordained the same in all the churches. (vii. 17.) If the covering of women—if the order of worship, were in question,



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he spoke of the customs of the churches of God, and the order of worship in all the churches of the saints. (xi. 16, xiv. 33.)

To leave souls in ignorance of the place into which they are brought through the labours of the evangelist, is to leave the work entrusted to him unfinished. What disorders would have been prevented, what feuds and troubles would have been averted, if labourers of former days had acted differently. What disorders may now be prevented, and the wanderings of the sheep effectually restrained, if evangelists, whilst leading souls to Christ, shew them that they are, through faith, when saved, members of the one Church of God, and part of the body of Christ.

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In discipline I learn what I need; the discipline is for this end. In the nearness of friendship, I learn what His mind is. The learning in discipline is generally personal; in friendship with the Lord (see John xv. 15), it is about Himself and His interests. One is more experience; the other, the deep things of God.

## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

At the end of chapter xx. it is written, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and, that believing, ye might have life through his name." Here we are told that it is one great truth that has been opened out in the foregoing chapters of this book, and, therefore, it is important that we should be able to connect the links in one unbroken chain.

My desire is, if the Lord enable me, to point out the links and mark their connection, and thus make the chain more easy of apprehension to the general reader.

Chapter i.—The first chapter is properly an epitome of Christ. Here is presented to us the whole range of Christ, from His being with God and being God, unto the point where the angels of God ascend and descend on Him as the Son of man on earth. The whole distance is spanned; while in the interval are unfolded all the great vir-

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tues and ways of working of this blessed One. He is the Word; He was with God, and He *was* God. The Word signifies the expression of the mind: the thing uttered or declared.

“All things were made by him.” The acts followed and were effected by Him who was the Word. By Him all things subsist. Next, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” There was no light anywhere else. The light shines in darkness. Wonderful fact! The light is manifested where it is needed, but the darkness did not comprehend it; did not apprehend how appropriate and suited it was to its need. So much is stated as shewing the greatness and nature of this blessed One, and His moral value to men.

And then we are told of a *man* who was sent from God to bear witness of the light; and his name is given to mark the definiteness of his mission. A man of men is sent to announce that this light is come, in order that all might believe through Him. The light does not shine to exhibit itself; but this

## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH, ETC. 141

man (John) is sent to bear witness to it that all might believe. How gracious and blessed ! He was not the Light himself ; he must not be mistaken for it. The power of the true Light is, that it cometh into the world to lighten every man. No other could. He not only made man, but man is dependent on Him for light.

Verse 10.—We have Him now as come into the world ; but He is *unknown*. He came unto his own things and his own people received him not ; but as many as received Him, to them is given right to become children of God. As many as received Him, received new and distinct blessing from Him ; they believed on His name. He is come to bless. Received in faith, He blesses entirely anew. They are born of God ; not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man—in no known or existing way, but entirely of God. Then, verse 14, we have Him in *flesh*, come as a man among men in the world. But though in flesh, it was not the glory of the flesh that He bore ;

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but the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

Now being presented a Man on earth, John's testimony is again alluded to.

Verse 16.—He is no mere man; but of His fulness (whose glory was superior to the glory of the flesh) have we all received, and grace for grace—grace upon grace.

But there is another thing : the law was given by Moses, but by this blessed Man *came* grace and truth;—unmerited favour, and yet everything openly and distinctly exposed just as it was on every side—man's ruin and God's love, which had been denied. This is *truth*; and this with the favour, came by Him. He who is the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared the Father, made Him manifest; so that this only-begotten Son was not only the Word, the uttered expression, but He was the perfect revelation of God in His nature. May we worship as we behold.

Next, we have a summary of John's testimony (ver. 19, &c.); the character

## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH, ETC. 14

of the opposition to it; and John's announcement that there was One standing in their midst whom they knew not.

The place where these things were done, "beyond Jordan" (called Bethabara), is striking and significant as outside the land of Israel.

The next day (ver. 29)—we now get into a new day—he, the witness, sees Jesus coming unto him. And now for the public announcement of Him personally. He is, so to speak, presented thus: Behold the Lamb of God, the taker away, or taking away, the sin of the world. Then the witness reverts to his previous testimony, and adds, "I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest unto Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water;" thus intimating, that to submit to baptism was to declare that they were prepared to meet Him whom he announced. Again, the instruction given to John about Him was peculiar and distinct, and not gathered from any previous prophecy. "He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me,

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Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." This is an important link; not only does the Spirit descend and remain on Him, as owned of God in His mighty mission, but "the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." This is the link and the power by which we are united to Him; and John adds, "And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Verse 35. Now we have another day; this was John's last day, or, at least, the point at which his disciples passed from him to Christ. Seeing Jesus walking, he says, "Behold the Lamb of God"—a term which implied sacrifice on this earth. For this purpose he had previously added, what is left out here—"who taketh away the sin of the world." John's two disciples hear him, and they follow Jesus. They hear the testimony, and follow this lonely One, God's Lamb on the earth! What a sight! He had no one with Him, but when He heard them following, He turned, and on

## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH, ETC. 145

seeing them said, "What seek ye?" This solitary Stranger might well put such a question to them; and how simple and expressive is their reply! "Where dwellest thou?" I can in no way better express my desire to become acquainted with any one, than in seeking to be with such an one in his own abode; and it was no small matter to see and to know this wondrous Stranger in His own home. "Come and see," is His gracious reply; and so good is it to them to be with Him that they remained there that day — it was the tenth hour, within two hours of evening. There is something very touching and significant in this incident. It tells the nature and manner of the Lord's reception of every one who seeks His company and acquaintance; and, thus, it represents to us the character of the relationship and intimacy, which He accords at this moment to His people. The millennial scene is different, when He will be publicly seen as the centre of all blessing. Here He is peculiarly known *at home*; and it describes to us



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our place and nearness to Him at *this present time*. It was Andrew who brought Simon, son of Jonas, to Jesus, and he is named Cephas (a stone), which is significant as relating to testimony.

The next day the Lord would go forth into Cana of Galilee, and He finds Philip. The different ways by which souls are led to Him, is interesting to notice. This link indicates how He gathers; and reaches on to perfection in truth. Philip was of the same city as Andrew and Peter. Philip finds Nathanael and announces to him, "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael is doubtful because of the place: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But he comes to Jesus, and the Lord anticipates him, by disclosing to him, not only that His eye had been on him at a moment when he had little thought of it; but that the same eye had discerned all that was in his heart: for the Lord's words immediately impart to Nathanael the sense that he is *known*

## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH, ETC. 147

*of Him.* Wonderful charm this, and amazing power in binding the heart to Him! convincing it that the One with whom it has to do is Almighty; and not only so, but with the distinct intimation that he ever keeps His eye on His own. Nathanael is here a sample of the true remnant of Israel, seen and watched over by their Lord and Messiah, but not yet seeing Him. But the day will come when they shall exclaim, like Nathanael, "Thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel." To him accordingly the Lord now unfolds His own place in the great millennial day which is henceforth ready to be revealed, the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.

Thus in this chapter, are epitomized, as I may say, all the wonderful characteristics of the Blessed One who has come from God to do His will.

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## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

### THE POWER FOR US, AND THE POWER AGAINST US.

AMONGST the many things which the Church of God lost, was the distinct personality of the agents for good or for evil in this world; even the Holy Ghost and Satan. So long had the minds of men vaguely apprehended the sources of good and evil, that when an action, which bespoke the personal presence of either, took place men—even christian men, were not prepared justly to appreciate it, nor to act suitably in reference to it. Therefore it is that we hear discussed the qualities of the vessel, by which God wrought the work, as though that work were a mere providential act of God; or lower still, as if it were a mere accident; the result of the presence of certain qualities in the vessel, in conjunction with the peculiarity of a certain time, or the meeting of kindred minds in other men.

Now God does work in providence, and in those very scenes too in which He

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Himself is about to act, for everything is in His hand; but this ought not to have hindered men from seeing that He was there working in the midst of the scenes and circumstances which He had previously ordered. And so of the instruments He is about to use, He forms them for Himself, and for the use He is about to make of them — separating them from their mother's womb and calling them in due time.

What right minded Christian would judge that the Reformation was only the result of the state of Europe at that time—the revival of literature, discovery of the art of printing; the gross and exceeding wickedness of the professing church; and the condition of the nations; and would not rather see, that even as God set all the Roman Empire in commotion as to a taxing (Luke ii.), in order that Jesus should be born in Bethlehem; so He ordered it, that those circumstances should all tend to the furtherance and promotion of that which He was about to do by Luther; who was himself also previously prepared for

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such a work? But to faith, it was God Himself who was working. Even as to John when on the sea of Galilee, he recognized the One who stood on the shore, and at whose bidding there came a multitude of fishes; — “It is the Lord.” (John xxi. 7.)

It is practically important to us thus to apprehend, that in a certain action, however helped by the circumstances connected with it, God or Satan is there engaged in a direct work. For if it be God, the saint not only is to be connected with it, but, in the exercise of a spiritual mind, is to act and judge of everything in relation to it. This, in its way, is fellowship, which He graciously permits His people to have with Him in every work wrought by the Holy Ghost in this world. The saint, if spiritual, owns it, and it forms him and gives him a character for the time being. The instrument too is lost sight of, which is a most happy thing for the soul; and he is only in company with the Spirit of God, with others, like him, so taught to apprehend it. On the

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other hand if Satan be detected in a certain work here, through instruments, and as taking advantage of the circumstances there found; the saints' only course is to flee; or to resist it as Satan. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." But where the soul has not laid hold on the direct personality of God, or of Satan in any action, it is weak to resist Satan, because Satan is not detected; man is seen, and it may be saints (alas! too often, his instruments,) are seen, and our rule of action towards them is merely founded on their being ill instructed and erring through ignorance. This is weakness, for Satan is there, and it is his way to keep hidden behind his instruments, for if detected, he has lost his power over a saint.

At the present time all this is most important, both for the comfort and blessing of the soul, and for distinctness of action, in every way, in our path and service as saints. For in our day too, there is a distinct work of the Spirit of God, in the which we are to find our

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place; not because there are blessings there, or that it is a better place than others, though that be true; but because it is a distinct work of the Spirit of God; and we find our place, as well as our joy, in being there, in a spirit of *obedience*, as well as happy fellowship. The word had spoken of a cry being made which would arouse the sleeping virgins; this cry has been made; and we are in the results of it. This action of the Spirit of God, which occupies the sphere of the lifetime of any who may have lived the last forty or fifty years, is that which primarily demands the attention of the people of God. The result of this cry is very extensive; it awakens not only the sleeping wise, but the foolish. Everything in the professing church assumes a distinctness. Seeds which had lain there unproductive of results for ages; from the word of God, down to the various doctrines of men — now are springing up and bearing fruit. One only needs to look abroad to see this; there are activities abroad, which refer to what previously existed as a warrant

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for their being. And the saints of God in like manner refer to what previously existed as *their* warrant for their peculiar action—peculiar now, as in contrast to what preceded, for “they all slumbered and slept.” This is why the calling of the Church is, now at length, better understood, and the place of the Holy Ghost abiding here; this is why the hope of the Church is being understood, and the person of Jesus more displayed to the souls of His people.

And what remains now? That we “go forth.” There is the trimming of the lamps going on—and all that which it comprises, both as to personal ways and doctrine; the putting away of everything that would hinder the shining of our lights; and all that remains is now even as at the beginning, a “going forth” to meet Him.

This is the action of the Holy Ghost in our day. What a loss to any saint if the world in any of its various forms should still hold any of His saints in sleep as to it. Saints they may be, having part in the *result* of God's



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counsel, but as to their life, now, *not walking* in God's counsel.

This is the larger sphere of action of the Spirit of God in these days, but there has been another, within that sphere, where we have, not the Spirit of God only, but an active work of Satan to destroy the testimony God purposed to raise, and to rob the Church again of those truths He had been re-teaching His saints the last forty years. Where, may I ask, are *we* in reference to those two activities? Is what God has been teaching us about Christ so precious to us, that we must let everything go but this? Are the truths we have learned these last forty years so important to us, and to the Church of God, that we dare not let them be imperilled, nor give them up? And have we seen God, by His Spirit, again active for the preservation and maintenance of these truths? and have we co-operated with Him in this action? There may be a settling in our souls of what is right and what is wrong; but it is not merely this that we shall have to seek, but

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having personally to do with God, in that which He is doing, so that our souls have faith in Him as to our place in, and connection with, it. If we have this faith, we walk with Him; we have a calmness which merely settling the right and the wrong never could give. The soul, too, by this, arrives at the settlement of questions by a safer rule, for it judges of them from the place it is in. We walk with God, and in His light we see light.

It is not merely a question of truth committed to us, there is but the sovereign and faithful grace, of help given, after complete ruin had come in. The arm made bare bespeaks, to the spiritually minded, a presence with us, which, though it was always true, comes with a greater sweetness and preciousness now, because it tells us of a love and purpose which nothing could turn back.

May His saints know this love and presence, and walk in it; and may we love the way, and have our hearts in it, rough though it be. He tróð it—the

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Blessed One, and the Holy Ghost abides and leads in the way too. May we know and love and seek fellowship with Him!

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READY TO DEPART  
AND WAITING FOR OUR LORD.

It is interesting to meditate on the subjects which engage the one about to die, and the one about to be translated; and to see how we ought practically to combine the two.

Moses (Deut. iii. 27—xxxiv.) is occupied with a survey of Canaan, and he is told, "Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward; and *behold it with thine eyes.*" And when he has had a full survey, he is to be gathered unto his people. The vision of glory to Stephen (Acts vii. 55) is the spiritual realization of all this. And to him also it was a preparation for death. In the dissolution and breaking up of all nature's links,

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there was given to him an unfolding and revelation of his future portion.

Now with Elijah (2 Kings ii.) it was quite different. He knew that he was about to be translated, and therefore his last hours were occupied with service, rather than with visions, which would have so amazingly compensated him for the trial of death. He was more in the spirit of the porter watching for the return of his Lord — setting all things to rights; occupied with his Master's concerns to the very last. Now, we see these two lines *combined* in the apostle Paul. He had, from a site loftier than Pisgah, surveyed the "good land;" and he longed to depart and be with Christ. But he also had his conversation (citizenship) in heaven, and from *thence* looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to change his vile body. And while he did so, the Lord's interests here on earth were more anxiously his care than ever. Personal consolation is necessary for departure—a view from Pisgah's heights. Stephen had personal suffering before

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him ; but the vision (the glory of God and Jesus) rendered him so proof against it that he could pray for his murderers.

But to await the Son from heaven is to go on, like Elijah, intent on the interests of Christ, and without sense of personal trial, may we, like Paul, combine both: not only (as Moses) take a full survey of the glorious land, but, as Elijah, occupy ourselves with our Master's interests, to the very last: having our loins girded, and our lights burning; and we ourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.

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IN days of increasing gloom and perplexity like the present, the soul is more sent to the sure hiding-place of safety — to the sunny Pisgah heights of hope and observation. There it can meditate on the strength of those foundations which God has put under our feet, and know the intimacy of that communion, into which He has even now introduced our hearts, and the brightness of those prospects which He has set before our eyes. And is *He* our object? The heart well knows

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the power of that which is its object. Do we make the Lord Jesus such? Do we find in ourselves anything of that "sickness of hope," of which we read in Scripture? and are we able to say, "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"

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He was "obedient unto death, the death of the cross," whose *mind* I am called to have in me. The object of His death as here looked at (Phil. ii.), was the manifestation of the perfection of His obedience; the proof, too, of His full fellowship with His Father's counsel. And has He, the will-subject One, brought me indeed into that place, wilful one that I was before I knew redemption, atonement, righteousness, and glory, that I can subject my will to His, as did Abraham in the sacrifice of Isaac?

Yes. And it is now not my will, nor my time, but His and His alone, whether He means to take me or mine through *that* portal, or through the glorious window of heaven at His coming.

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We should be at the Lord's table as "widows," because we are on the earth, where He is not; but with bridal joys in our hearts, because we are in spirit *with Him*—out of the world. The world is but His cemetery to us; yet in visiting it, it is not with the sense of bereavement, but with the sense of His love in dying for us.

## THE INHERITANCE.

My heart is onward bounding,  
Home to the land I love ;  
Its distant vales and mountains  
My longing passions move.  
Fain would my thirsting spirit  
Its living freshness breathe :  
And wearied feet find resting,  
Its hallowed shades beneath.

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

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

# PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

## PART IV.

### THE TEACHER.

CHRISTIANITY does not consist in the reception of a certain creed or peculiar truths. It is a life imparted, everlasting in its duration, active in its character, divine in its nature, having for its aim the glory of God and the welfare of immortal souls.

The Christian, therefore, may have a sphere of work outside the Church as an evangelist, or inside it as a teacher. The former brings souls, through the preaching of the gospel, from the world without, into the one flock, or Church; the latter leads on souls within, into the truth as revealed in God's word. For the work of the teacher is to teach what has been revealed, not to communicate fresh truth. Wherever there is a soul unsaved, there is a field for the evangelist; wherever there are saints of God to be found, there is a sphere of service for the teacher. How much this truth



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has been lost sight of through the multiplication of denominations in the one body of Christ on earth ! Christians of different denominations can unite to own an evangelist as a gift to act on the world. How few are as ready to acknowledge that teachers are set by God in the one Church, for the help and instruction of all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. How refreshing to turn from the sectarian feeling so frequently displayed in these days, to contemplate the fervent catholic spirit of a teacher as depicted in God's word.

Paul was an evangelist to preach that gospel proclaimed to every creature under heaven. Paul was also a teacher, set by God in the Church, to teach and warn every man, that he might present every man perfect in Christ. The Colossian saints he had never seen ; but since they were saints, he was concerned with them. For them he was suffering at Rome, and rejoiced at it, though he had never been in their midst (Col. i. 24) ; and filled up what was lacking of the sufferings of Christ in his flesh for

His body's sake, which is the Church. "For you," he writes, "I suffer," because they formed part of the Church.

To Paul was given a special service—to fulfil the word of God, the mystery once hidden, but now made manifest to His saints, to whom (i.e., the saints) God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is "Christ in you the hope of glory." Entrusted with such a ministry, he did not feel his work was done when he fulfilled the word of God, by first setting forth the mystery. God would have it made known to the saints. By Paul, the apostle, the minister of God's choice, was the word of God fulfilled, or completed. By Paul the teacher was the mystery, and the riches of the glory of it, proclaimed far and wide. What a theme he had to dwell on! "Christ in you the hope of glory." This concerned the saints in general, and each one in particular. By and by "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." But

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what these Colossians expected was, not simply to see the glory, but to be in it. When that glory is revealed, the place of the Gentiles on earth will be subordinate to that of the Jews. For those to whom Paul wrote, though Gentiles by descent, such national distinctions no longer existed. (Chap. iii. 11.) The glory was to be their place, and Christ in them, the riches of the glory of the mystery—the hope of it.

This One he preached, warning every man and teaching every man, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul laboured hard, travelled far, and was ready to journey even to Spain to do his Master's work. Yet all the while he never forgot his own countrymen. He preached to them at Rome from morning till evening when he first reached it. The special field of labour assigned to him by the Lord had not the effect of narrowing his interests, or fostering a sectarian spirit: "Warning *every* man," he could write, "and teaching *every* man in all wisdom;" and this

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at the cost of much labour and fatigue to himself. (Chap. i. 29.)

Nor was this all. His heart was in the work, because Christ had the first place in his affections. His heart was interested in those saints who were at a distance, because they were members of Christ. He laboured in teaching, he had conflict in prayer (chap. ii. 1; iv. 12). He received all who came to him at Rome, preaching the kingdom of God and those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. He bore on his heart in prayer to God, those saints at Colosse and Laodicea, and as many as had not seen his face in the flesh. Epaphras was always striving earnestly in prayer for them (chap. iv. 12), but he was one of them. All would understand his deep interest in those to whom he had communicated God's truth. But Paul felt an interest in them so deep, that he too must strive in prayer for them; and what did he desire? That they should take his part against the Judaizing teachers who would undermine his authority

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in the assemblies established among the Gentiles? The welfare of the saints, not their estimation of him, was his object. "That their hearts might be comforted [or, encouraged], being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment [*rather* full knowledge] of the mystery of God,\* in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Here the heart of a true teacher is laid bare. A slight acquaintance with truth on their part could not satisfy him. He wanted their hearts to be encouraged, and all to be united together in love. Love, the expression in part of the divine nature, he desired, but knowledge too, "and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God." And why this urgent desire for those to whom he was personally unknown? Because what he had expressed was the only true safeguard for their souls: "In which are

\* "Of the Father and of Christ," Gr., Sch., Tis., and Alf. omit.

hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He feared they should be beguiled with enticing words. Their order, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ, he beheld and rejoiced in; but the full knowledge of the mystery of God he desired for them.

Rome was far from Colosse, but the keen eye of the teacher detected an evil of which perhaps they were unconscious. Faith they had in Christ Jesus; love they had manifested, which embraced all saints. The word of the truth of the gospel had reached them. They had received it, and it had brought forth fruit in them. He could speak of past effects, but not of them only; "bringing forth fruit and increasing" (for so we should read) "in all the world, and in them, since the day they heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth," is his description of its then present working among them. Their love in the Spirit, Epaphras had manifested to him. In what could they be lacking? What could he desire for them? His desire is shortly summed

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up in chapter i. 9—12. What they lacked, it would seem, was a clear understanding of the dangers that beset them, as expressed in chapter ii. 8 to the end, and the way to meet them.

Had their eye been anointed to see their dangers, there would have been no need to point them out. Had they been on the alert with the true remedy, he need not have stated it. But it is the part of a teacher to see the tendency of a certain spiritual course, and to supply the instruction suited to the occasion. As a teacher, he saw whither, if not warned, they might drift; and as one divinely taught, and called to teach others, he pointed out what they must do. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Chap. ii. 6, 7.)

Such are his directions. Further on he shews how these, if carried out, will meet all that would draw them aside. Here he sums them up. One object is

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put before them, Christ Jesus the Lord. One revelation about Him he keeps before them, "As ye have received." Nothing fresh had they to receive, but only to keep hold of and app'y what Epaphras had been the means of communicating. And this is most valuable in these days. For what Epaphras, a minister of Christ, had taught them, was all that they wanted. The fulness of what he had given them, each one had to learn for himself; but the revelation he had conveyed to them embodied the full truth: "As ye have received," he could say, and "as ye have been taught." Paul reminds them of what they had been taught. The truth communicated by him and others to the Church, Epaphras had set before them; and Paul, who fulfilled the word of God, has nothing further to make known. Of fresh truth, hitherto unrevealed, about the Lord Jesus, he says nothing. Of development in after ages he is silent. What they had they were to hold, and as they had received Christ Jesus the Lord, they were to walk in Him, rooted



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and built up in Him, &c. He shuts the door against anything besides Christ, or anything beyond Christ. As a teacher, he expounds what the riches of the glory of the mystery are. He shews that there can be nothing needful, nothing to be possessed of value, for their souls outside of Christ. Philosophy, vain deceit, pretension to knowledge hidden from others, the need of observing Jewish rites, all such teaching, from whomsoever it might come, would, if accepted, effect a severance between them and the Head, "from whom the whole body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

As Paul writes : "As ye have received : " John, another teacher, says, "Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning." (1 John ii. 24.) Both these teachers and apostles, though one fulfilled the word of God, and the other recorded "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to shew unto his servants things which must shortly

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come to pass," turn souls to what had been revealed about Christ, as all they wanted, and all God would give: to what was known in the days of Epaphras, to what was heard from the beginning, is the teacher to turn now, and from it, as found in the written word, to build up souls in the truth.

Other features of a teacher we must reserve for a future article.

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## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Chap. ii. 1-22.)

HERE we are introduced to the third day and the nature of the blessing which will be established on the earth is portrayed. But the present state of man is first presented; and the Lord, as it were before His time, sets forth how He will be the source of perfect and sustained happiness to man on earth.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee—a place of no distinction. The mother of Jesus was there. This seems

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to be His link to the occasion; the reason of His being invited with His disciples to the marriage. His mother occupies a prominent place. I apprehend that she represents the Jewish people, who, cognizant of their state, tell Him that they had no wine, or rather that the wine was out. Now this marriage scene represents man in his own condition. A wedding is a scene which presents man naturally in his brightest, happiest estate; and with Israel this ought to have been so after a special manner; for they were blest in the basket and in the store, with plenty of corn and wine. Yet here the wine is out and the need is felt, and the Lord is appealed to, to supply the deficiency. Man in his own condition is a failure, even when endowed by God with the richest and fullest natural blessings. Solomon is a witness of this. He was raised to the highest natural state both in riches and wisdom (not one apart from the other; which many would plead as an excuse for themselves; but he had plenty of wisdom, and plenty of means to effect

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any ends he might devise). And what then? Did he arrive at happiness? Was the wine never exhausted with him? Did he not own and write that all his efforts to reach anything securely happy were in vain? Nay, that it was not only vanity, but vexation of spirit? Surely *his* wine was out. Man himself is oppressed with the sense of a coming cloud in his brightest moment. The more attractive anything is, the more it suggests the sorrow of losing it; because it will, it must, fade away. The Lord is present at this marriage scene, seeing and comprehending man in his true condition—his sun going down at noon-day, the sense of need breaking in and checking, instead of the fulness of supply sustaining, the hour and season of human happiness.

Whether we look at man *without revelation*, reaching to philosophy, and seeking wisdom as his light; or at the Jew *with revelation*, seeking a sign—something to confirm him in it; we see what man is, in a double way; the two branches Jew and Gentile meet in the one point,

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and expose to us a condition truly defective and unhappy—the wine is out!

When the mother of Jesus called His attention to the fact, His reply intimated, “You have no claim on me:” “my time is not yet come.” She, however, understanding that He would act in grace, directs the servants to be obedient: “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” The Jews had their six water-pots of stone for purifying; the Lord uses these vessels to administer the good wine. The good wine will flow from purification. Man is a failure in his whole condition; but the Lord, while seeing this, and the utter and hopeless failure of man to repair it (for if the wine is out, if there be a cloud in the brightest moment, in the moment when he does his utmost—what must there be at other times), here shews anticipatively how *He* will repair all. He will bring the new and the better wine through the water of purification, and thus give on the earth full and established happiness, in the great millennial day.

The next great subject in this chapter

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commences with verse 13. The Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. There he sees man, even the favoured people of God, in his *relation* to God. He had seen and been a witness to man's failure as to his own condition; and now He sees the Jew, in his relation toward God; and he is a scandal. God's temple—His testimony on earth—instead of being honoured, was used to subserve the selfish interests of man. His house is a den of thieves. As we know, whether with the Jew, or in Christendom, the name of God is used to promote and secure the selfish and covetous desires of man. The history of religion, though divinely introduced, comprises the worst displays of human evil! Could anything be more condemnatory of man than that, in his relation to God, and in proportion to the favour granted him, he should so expose the evil workings of his nature that the house of God should be a den of thieves? Jesus maintains not only the honour of God—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up"—but He will

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repair all, bring in all new. Destroy this temple, and I will rear it up in three days; but He spake of the temple of His body. Christ in resurrection establishes everything, and gives strength to His word in the souls of His disciples.

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## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

## HOW TRUTH IS PERVERTED.

THERE is nothing in the history of the Church, or of souls, more grievous than the fact that truth can be so perverted that the name of it only is left, and often so much so, that the name stands for the very contrary to that to which it was originally attached. It has often been said that Satan will spoil what he cannot hinder, and hence we ought to be more careful to assure our hearts from the word of God of the idea which belongs to and characterizes the names of doctrines received by all Christians. The true and scriptural names are retained, but when we come to examine

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what these names stand for, we find that they do not represent the ideas given to them in scripture. They really are perversions of the truth. Man's ideas have been adopted as exponents of the truth, instead of the ideas set forth in the word of God.

We must in this day own that the prediction of our Lord has been verified, namely, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened." The leaven is the introduction of an element which has extended the original thing unnaturally. The human idea is this leaven, and it has so added to the original and divine teaching, that the doctrine now called in Christendom after the scriptural name, bears little or no resemblance to the doctrine to which the same name is attached in scripture. This is very serious; and it is not from outside that this evil occurs. "Of your own selves (Acts xx.) shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." If there were



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no perversion of the truth, there would be no disciples except disciples of Christ. No man would attain to any distinct leadership, "for one is your Master, even Christ." It is very important to see, that if the truth were not perverted, there could be no leadership but in Christ; and that it is in the perversion of truth that disciples are drawn away. The effect of the simple maintenance of truth is to draw to Christ. John the Baptist proclaimed the truth; and his disciples, in adopting it, forsook him to follow Christ; and in this day, it is a well known fact that, as godly earnest ministers have pressed truth, the simple and devoted among their followers have left them, in order that they might follow the truth more perfectly than the instruments, through which they had first learned it; and doubtless, if every godly minister would discard everything not scripturally true, then the faithful would cease to be ranked under the leadership of men. One may ask, How is it that godly earnest men do not discard everything

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not scripturally true? I answer, Because they are guided by conscience and not by the word of God. By their consciences they are calmed into the assurance that they are doing the best for the general good; and this they seek. Now it is the word of God which alone should guide me, and my conscience ought not to be satisfied, unless I am assured that everything I teach and adhere to is scripturally true. To say that this or that is the definition given to any doctrine by the most devoted man, is really no warrant to my conscience. Such comments may help me to understand the doctrine, but I am bound to understand it in the light of scripture, before I teach it. Scripture must be my guide, and not my conscience or the comments of my brethren. The teacher receives his gift neither by man nor from man: he is gifted of the Lord, and he must not only be conscientious, but he must be enlightened according to Christ's mind, before he can be the organ of that mind. It every minister of Christ now-a-days

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set himself sedulously to ascertain from scripture the true meaning of any doctrine, as there set forth, divesting his mind from the definition and interpretation into which it had swollen, he would soon find that he had escaped from a mass of confusion, and that an unerring light had now shone in on his soul and mind.

But it is not only from making the conscience umpire that earnest men suffer; there is another snare, which is still more difficult to expose. Perversion of the truth is always to suit a practical state. It is the lower order of practice which, when there is conscience, leads to a lower order of truth, or a misplacement of the order, because it matches the state and quiets the conscience, and the lower order of practice is confirmed and perpetuated by the lower order of truth. Now, when any one attempts to form an idea of a truth from his own practical observance of it, or seeks to make it practicable, of course he shapes the truth to his practice, instead of demanding

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that his practice should conform to the truth. Man, as is natural, likes to leave out from a doctrine that which makes it impossible to man in nature, and to substitute something under the same name, and thus deceive the conscience with what is possible for man without self-sacrifice. To follow truth now, I can only do so in the Spirit, outside nature; this is the starting-point. Now, if I wish to accept a truth, and at the same time to save myself—in a word, to escape the edge of it—I necessarily later it in such a way that I may feel I retain the doctrine, without subjecting myself—my nature—to death, by the acceptance of it. Peter savoured of the things which be of men, and not of the things which be of God, when he said to the Lord “spare thyself.” The real difficulty to the simple acceptance of truth is the annihilating exaction it makes on nature. And whenever a truth is said to be held without this exaction, we may be assured that some modification or alteration of the truth has been adopted, in order to spare one-

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self. Strange and peculiar are these modifications and alterations. Faith is a unity, and can only lead in one way. Every truth, truly apprehended by faith, must lead directly in the same way. It may be differently in measure seen, but the same measure produces the same result. If Mark returns from Pamphylia (Acts xv. 38), it is because the truth exacted too much from him. If Peter refuses to eat with the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 11), it is because he would spare himself; the truth of the gospel, for which Paul contended, exacted too much of him. Demas cannot bear the exaction of the truth. (2 Tim. iv. 10.) If Timothy knows and follows Paul's doctrine, he must also know and follow his "manner of life." If the doctrine be truly held, the manner of life will be an exemplification of it. If a man say (as has been said) that the Church, the body of Christ, is in heaven, and speaks of Jesus as being here (with man as man), he so entirely misplaces the truth, without denying it, that to hold this doctrine imposes on

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him no self-death here, and his conscience is lulled, and the truth lost. For if the body of Christ is in heaven, I am not responsible to walk here on earth as of it; and if Jesus, who is really in heaven, and known here by the Holy Ghost, is put on a level with us in the flesh, Christianity is reduced to a mere human thing, and the truth, that now, through the Spirit, we are united with Him in heaven, and from *thence* receive of Him, to fill our place in the body here on earth, is lost. Could there be a greater perversion of truth than that the Church, the body of Christ, is in heaven? The truth is, that it is *from* heaven, but *on* earth; yet many earnest conscientious souls accept this perversion as the truth; and the consequence is, they have lost the truth, and with it the effects which are produced by the truth. Each truth produces its own proper effects; hence, if you lose the truth, you must lose the effects of it.

Again; another will so accept and explain the unity of the Spirit, that all Christians can be received as united,

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because professors of the same life, though they are connected with systems and orders of things most opposed to one another; so that the unity of the Spirit is practically reduced to the socialism of a club. Again, others, with more light, will contend that similar opinions, with soundness in faith, and holy walk (that is, individual propriety), necessarily places in the unity of the Spirit. Then the Spirit is only a common bond for separate and distinct units, and not the unity of the body of Christ, where each is affected by the other, and is necessarily a guardian of the other; for it is the Spirit (who baptizes the whole into one) who must be considered, and not the individual, as to what he holds or does. He may neither hold what is wrong or do what is wrong, and yet his association may grieve the Spirit of God; the unity be denied, and the body suffer. The unity of the Spirit makes the body of Christ one, because the Holy Ghost is one. We are all baptized by one Spirit into one body, and where He is, there must be

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n abnegation of everything unsuited to Christ. The thing which, by no possible means, could injure one naturally, becomes vitally dangerous, when in the vicinity of the Spirit. As a man, I may not suffer from the bad habits of my associates, unless they seduce me into likeness: not so in the Church of God; "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

I may not suffer as a man, because I hear vain babbling in the society that I resort to, at least, I may not be morally degraded by it, or unfitted thereby to be a good member of society; and yet it is so in the Church; and a man cannot be a "vessel unto honour," unless he purges himself from such things. To bid an ordinary "farewell" to a man who brings not the doctrine of Christ can in no wise injure or affect me naturally; and yet, as in the fellowship of the Spirit, if I do so, I am partaker of his evil deeds, and necessarily disqualified for church association. (2 John.)

The natural mind cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him, neither can he



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know them, because they are spiritually discerned. If the natural mind receives it, or knows it, it is not of the Spirit of God. The unity of the Spirit cannot be maintained truly, but as there is a distinct dissociation from and exclusion of all that which is contrary to the Spirit Himself, and in conjunction with all those who are walking in the Spirit. We are exposed to perversions so long as we are babes. To raise us to maturity is the aim of all ministry, as it is written (Eph. iv. 13, 14): "Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no more babes, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, for a method of deception" (as it may be more freely translated). The force of the passage is, that if I am not matured in Christ, I am exposed to human sleight; which, by cunning craftiness, grows into a method of deception. It is man's work and

way of escaping the edge and power of the truth, and it ends in a systematized error.

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## TESTING: THE HARVEST-TIME OF FAITH.

It is necessary in our histories that we should, in one way or another, lose the sense of link to things here. To a Hezekiah, who had all his links connected with earth, this was most grievous. The very fact that his links were all God's gifts to Him, made it still more grievous that they should be broken. Hezekiah's hopes and joys—God's blessings to him as a Jew—were all connected with earth. Hence, all were lost to him if his links with earth were ended, but it was in the break-up of them that his soul reached dependence on God, as the living God—the one who raiseth the dead. This was practically his experience. (See Isaiah xxxviii.) Now, if it was needful for him, how much more for us. The point reached by Hezekiah was, that God could raise the dead, and this

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he experienced in his restoration after he had been given up for death. We, on the other hand, have all our hopes and joys, personally and for our hearts, in glory. Christ is there; and in us He is the hope of glory. So that every break of our links here, and every sense of it, if divinely accepted, only connects us the more distinctly with our true sphere and home. If Hezekiah or Abraham required this exercise and experience, how shall we complain of being brought through it? They avowedly were given no other hope or prospect but the kingdom of God on earth; and yet they must, by the bitterest experience, be taught that death must first supervene, and that all the lights here, even those lighted of God, must go out, and they must find their hope only in God, who raiseth the dead. Now we have got our life and our portion in heaven: (how different to them!) and hence we ought to be prepared for, and bow to, the discipline which loosens and breaks our links with this scene, where *really* we have no allowed hope or prospect.

Hezekiah loses it for himself; Abraham gives up his son, which is practically a more complete surrender. Many an one gives up prospects for himself who cannot so easily give them up with regard to his children. But what a fine page in one's history, when one starts again here after either of these experiences! To speak figuratively, one is as a creature, a caterpillar; when the lights go out and moral death is known, one is a chrysalis; but when the soul emerges from this state in the power of life, it is a butterfly, with wings, to bask in the bright sunshine of a new world of glory which alone suits it. The simple fact of a saint returning to this scene to walk in it, after the lights here had in experience gone out, and the portals of glory were well nigh crossed, with the thought at the moment of never recrossing them, is a wondrous reality, and the sense of severance from things here, which it produces, remains on the soul. No mere belief in truth can impart the same impression to one as the practice of it can. Hence, testing is always

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the harvest-time of faith. Such an one has learned the sufficiency of Christ outside everything here. He, whose love passeth knowledge, is the portion of the soul. Wondrous and blessed lesson! His sufficiency is known as an *experienced fact*, not only enjoyed by faith, but tested by actual circumstances. Testing and experience is the same word.) Such an one can say, I have known what it is to have nothing but Christ, and, though in weakness and dissolution here, not to have *required* anything but Christ in the light and beauty of His own glory. I can do without links here! What a page in one's history! True, the Abraham page may have to come after this; but if we have happily and truly learned the Hezekiah page, we shall progress cheerfully through the rugged ways of this dying scene, rejoicing in spirit day by day more and more, in possession of our portion in Christ in glory, as of Him and by Him.

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## DEPENDENCE ON GOD.

CHRISTIANS often depend on God while leaning on some mercy of His hand to them, as children walk by the assistance of go-carts. To walk without any *seen thing* to lean on, is a new and peculiar path; and as a child pauses and shudders, ere he attempts it, though desiring it, and glad when he has succeeded in ever so small a way; so with us. We see we ought—we feel we may—we pause—we fear—we attempt—we succeed—we are glad. God's sufficiency is known to our souls, and this must be a never-to-be-forgotten moment. When a child first walks by himself, it is an act, the nature of which is known to him all his life long; and if it be interrupted either by accident or infirmity, how bitterly he feels it! Thus, when we have learned to walk in simple dependence on God, we never can substitute anything else for it; and if failure or infirmity (loss of communion) deprive us of it for a season, there must always be an effort of the new nature to return

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to an order of strength so normal and natural to us as of God. The Lord comfort your heart, and teach you daily how to practise walking in dependence on Himself, without any subsidy or aid. *Accustom yourself to look for it.* Try to walk, with ever so small steps, in simple rest in Him, making known to Him *all your heart*. You may rest assured that the reason why our machinery is so often or ever out of working order, or dragging heavily, is because there is some pressure on our hearts, which we have not disposed of to Him. The finer the machinery, the more easily is its action impeded; a hair will interrupt the wheels of a watch. Every pressure on the soul must be disposed of to God, or its action will be clogged and interrupted, and the whole be out of gear. *Unburden everything to Him.* Dispose of every pressure to His keeping, and the peace of God through Christ Jesus shall keep your heart and mind.

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# PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

## PART V.

### THE TEACHER.

WITH the Church for his sphere, and the word of God for his repository, from which all his teaching was drawn, the teacher in primitive times learned both how to divide rightly the word of truth, and how to speak to souls as they were able to hear it. For the necessity of the first of these qualifications we have inspired authority. (2 Tim. ii. 15.) For the illustration of the second we have the example of the Master Himself. (Mark iv. 33.)

Peter on the day of Pentecost rightly divided the word of truth, when he forebore to say of the prophecy of Joel, "this day is fulfilled;" and when he stopped short in the middle of the last verse, following the example of the great Teacher, who stopped in the middle of Isaiah lxi. 2 in the synagogue at Nazareth. (Luke iv. 19.) Paul knew how to act thus in teaching, when in the Romans he declares, "Ye



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are become dead to the law by the body of Christ;" whilst in writing to Timothy he could say, "We know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully." And James is another instance of this, when he spoke of that same law as the law of liberty, the expression of God's mind for the creature, which to the new man is perfect freedom.

To speak as souls were able to hear was another characteristic of the first teachers of Christianity. The example of such a manner of procedure the disciples witnessed in the Lord's dealings with the multitude, and the advantage of it in His dealings with themselves. (John xvi. 12.) Paul thus acted with the Corinthians and Hebrews. (1 Cor. iii.; Heb. v. 11, 12.) But herein do we discern a difference. The Lord did not upbraid the multitude, or rebuke the disciples for their inability to hear and receive what He had to speak. But Paul does rebuke both the Corinthians and the Hebrews, and rightly so. For in their day the Holy Ghost was on the earth in the Church,

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to guide believers into all the truth. All therefore that Paul could have taught them would have been truth in season, though, from their respective states, not seasonable for them. The moral condition of the Corinthians, who were carnal, and the infantine state of the Hebrews, hindered him from entering on these truths peculiar to Christianity which he would have otherwise set before them. There are stages of spiritual growth: fathers, young men, and infants in Christ. There are states and special circumstances of souls, and even of assemblies, which require spiritual discernment on the part of the teacher, and divine guidance how to meet, and how best to edify and to help. Tychicus was the bearer of two letters from Rome. One, known as the Epistle to the Ephesians, was a circular letter, if the reading of the two oldest MSS. be followed, "to the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus" (chap. i. 1), to be read in various assemblies. The other was a letter specially addressed to the Colossians, and dealt in truth suited

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for them, to be read also by the assembly at Laodicea.

But apart from the spiritual condition of souls, which hinders them from receiving truth, there may be special circumstances which call for a peculiar line of teaching. In Jude we have an instance of this. As one taught of God, able to judge of things as they are instead of as they may appear to ordinary observers, he would have written about the common salvation, but saw it was needful to write unto them and to exhort them to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." The evils which will culminate in the open apostasy of Christendom, he saw were already in their midst, introduced through the entrance of some who had come in unawares, and were feasting with the people of God. Of these people he writes to warn the saints. What was happening was not unforeseen. Enoch, before the flood, had prophesied of such; and the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ had spoken of the mockers who should be in the last

time. Jude therefore did not write of what was new; but he wrote to remind them of what had been predicted, and to point out the commencement of the fulfilment. To have written about the common salvation would have been in consonance with his spirit: to write about contending for the faith once delivered to the saints was needful for them.

And here do we discern another characteristic of the teachers of those days. They were unwearied in teaching, and if needful shrank not from enforcing continually the same truths. So Paul tells the Philippians (chap. iii. 1), "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous [or irksome], but for you it is safe." Judaizing error was rife almost everywhere. Often had he combated it; as often as was needful would he do it. "For you it is safe." He puts aside self where the profit of others is concerned. Peter acts in a similar spirit: "I will not be negligent [or, as some read, I will take care] to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be estab-

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lished in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." (2 Peter i. 12, 13.) The welfare of the saints required such unwearied attention, and he would bestow it. He knew the dullness of the heart, and was prepared to spend time and strength in reiterating these things as often as called for. "As long as I am in this tabernacle," he writes. He felt it not labour lost nor time misspent in reminding them of the "words spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour." To the written word he would take them, the prophets of the older dispensation, as well as bring before them constantly the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. Is not this the true spirit of a teacher, which throws itself into the mind of the pupil, discovers where it is, and labours continually to lead it on; but, forgetful of self, will go over the same ground, however irksome to the natural

man, till the lesson be learned, or the teacher's work be cut short by death? Had not these apostles caught something of the spirit of the Lord, as displayed in John xiv., when Philip said, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us?" He had pointed out in John x. how it might be known that the Father was in Him, and He in the Father. "Believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." To Philip's question He replies graciously, reiterating the same thing: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

But they rested not with providing for the present: their care for the saints made them think of the future. In this too they copied their Lord. "I will endeavour," writes Peter, "that ye may be able after my decease to have

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these things always in remembrance.” (2 Peter i. 15.) Paul warned the elders of Ephesus of the grievous wolves that would come in, and the evils that would spring up from among themselves after his departure. To the Thessalonians he writes of the antichrist that shall arise. To Timothy he describes the apostasy of the latter times and the wickedness of the last days. (1 Tim. iv.; 2 Tim. iii.) With these teachers it was no unwilling service they rendered. Their heart was in it. Grace had made them willing servants to God; love made them devoted labourers for the saints. So, whilst willing to receive pecuniary or other assistance from saints, their reward was not on earth: their hope, their crown of rejoicing, would be their converts in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.

Paul not only thought of the future but exhorted Timothy to commit what he had heard of him in the presence of many witnesses to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. ii. 2.) And in writing to

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Timothy he points out what teachers should be, who are neither apostles nor prophets, to whom revelations were vouchsafed—knowledge surely of great value to us in these days.

A few words on this part of the subject is all that we have room for. There were some who thought godliness could be made a source of gain, who taught things that they ought not for filthy lucre's sake. (1 Tim. vi.; Titus i.) The man of God must flee these things. Placed in the Church, and also being in the world, because on earth, he was to be a pattern to believers within; and so to act that those without or those who opposed him should have nothing to say against him. (1 Tim. iv. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 24; Titus ii. 7, 8.) As to teaching, to God's word he must be subject. Not a hint have we of any future revelation which would modify or alter the teaching of the apostle; not a word of the insufficiency of scripture, or a doubt of the value of it all. "Every scripture is divinely inspired," and "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly fur-



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nished unto all good works," are statements which stamp the word with lasting authority, and exclude all need, under whatever pretence, of going elsewhere for what the saint requires. The form of sound words he heard of Paul Timothy was to hold fast. Of what the Spirit spoke expressly he was to put souls in mind of. (1 Tim. iv.) In view of the perilous times that would come Timothy was to continue in the things he had learned, and to preach the word (not his thoughts or conceptions), making use of all opportunities that presented themselves.

What prominence is given to the written word, and what value is set on it! However varied may be the agents used, the words in which God has seen fit to have His thoughts clothed are not words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. (1 Cor. ii. 13.) This was the sword wielded in primitive times. This is the only weapon with which to do battle now.

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## JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.

THE life of Christ before the cross was not, in its character or objects, substitutionary, and therefore not vicarious. To affirm otherwise, would be to confound what Christ was in life with His work in death upon the tree. At the same time, He was our Saviour-Jesus from His birth.

Do any ask, What then were the meaning and value of the life He lived? I would reply, His life was invaluable to *Himself*, as manifesting in all its living perfectness who He was (in His own essential nature and being) who had come. Moreover, what He proved Himself to be, by all His moral glory, gives its value to what He subsequently did upon the cross, where He took the place of substitute, and made atonement for our sins with God.

His life was invaluable before God, as proving Him to have been the One of whom it was written, "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Do we think of *who* He must have

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been that needed measuring lines like these, in order to shew how His perfectness would exceed them both? How could He work out such great matters but by the life He lived? Estimated He might be, and was, both by "thy will," and "thy law;" measured, He could not be by either. "The volume of the book," and what was written there, as to the coming One, have found their embodiment in the living Son of God on this earth; and the heavens have opened over Him, and the Father has said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." His life was necessary for Himself, and for God.

It may be well to add, respecting these two measures, so concurrent and yet so different in their extent, the law said, "Do this and thou shalt *live*." Whereas, "I delight to do thy will, O my God," led Jesus to suffer and die! "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto *death*, even the death of the cross." Can any believer fail to observe these immense differences? An

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obedience under the law gave him who kept it a title to live; but death alone could be the measure of *that* obedience which could not find its perfectness short of laying down His life.

Once more: the life of Christ before the cross was needed to overcome *Satan*, in the stronghold of his power. "Then was Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." What is the value of that hour, when Jesus said, "Get thee hence, Satan?" What did the god of this world feel he had lost, as he left that scene defeated by this second man—the crown won back out of his hand, by the obedience of this living One? Will the devil look behind him, as he quits the wilderness, as the driven-out one? It will be to witness his defeat verified, by "the angels" of God coming to minister to the stronger than himself.

Sinners "in their sins" want this Jesus; but not merely in His life: this would suit them as needy *creatures*, when "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the

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devil." Men, *as sinners*, want this Jesus between themselves and God in the supremacy of His holiness. Will not this illustrious life avail for forgiveness, and obtain the remission of sins? Will not what He has proved Himself to be, and what the Father has owned Him to be, and what Satan has felt Him to be, secure justification and peace?

What questions are these? and where shall we get our answers? *We* must have this Christ, in the efficacy of His work in death and resurrection. He must go into the place of judgment, as a sin-bearer, if He would save lost and ruined sinners by taking them out from under the hand of God as a judge. He must be on the cross as our substitute, and "suffer in our stead, the just for the unjust."

This righteous One has come to the close of those three and thirty years, and done all in the life He led, that only such a life could do; and now His hour is come, that by laying down this life and by taking it again, He may carry His triumphs and victories beyond

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the range of our sins, and of God's judgments, and of Satan's power.

Righteousness has shone out brightly in the midst of a sinful world! This righteous Victim has bowed His head upon the cross, and said, "It is finished." He bore the burden and guilt of our sins; and by the sacrifice of Himself *they are gone*.

Moreover, God was *there*, in righteous judgment against sin—our sins—when borne by our substitute. Can any one fail to mark the difference between those assuring words from heaven a while ago, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and the cry of Jesus from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" when *He* was made *sin* for us, who knew no sin?

Will any suppose, when considering contrasts like these, that the work of Christ in life, and in death, were alike *vicarious* before God, or substitutionary as regards ourselves? This would be confusion indeed!

The life of the righteous One has

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been seen in its own circle, and for especial objects on this earth; the death of Christ has been viewed in its efficacious worth upon the cross; and in result, God has blotted out our sins, and cast them behind His back! “There is therefore now no condemnation;” but the believer has not got to *righteousness for himself* yet, nor will he be established in *this*, except in a risen Christ—the Lord Jesus, “who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

Moreover, divine righteousness has been glorified by His death on our account, as it had been by life on His own. And now God will vindicate the unspottedness of our Substitute, the Christ who bore our sin, by taking Him up out of death and by owning His *new* title in resurrection to sit on the right hand of God, “crowned with glory and honour.” The Son of man, who is there in His own inherent righteousness, is there also by the act of the Father, as the righteous reward of what He did. God has made this Christ to be “*unto us* wisdom,

## JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS. 209

righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." "We are made the righteousness of God in him."

Let us take care, whilst marking these distinctions as to what Christ was in life, and in death, and in resurrection, that we accept nothing less than *the whole person* of the blessed Lord, as the One in whom we stand before God, accepted and complete. We must not omit anything which makes up the perfectness of Him we own. How shall we know the Jesus who "loved us and gave himself for us," if we do not begin to learn Him in the mystery of His incarnation, as well as by that illustrious life which He laid down in death, as the only means of securing the glory of God against the enormity of sin and the triumph of Satan?

Does any one speak of the law? He magnified the law on the way, and accidentally (if we may so speak) in view of these far greater objects. Moreover, He "made it honourable." How could such an One do otherwise? The greater includes the less.



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We know Him and love to own Him, as having fulfilled all these and other incidental things, that *God* might be fully justified in all His ways; but is *this* our justification, or do we not find *ours* in a crucified and risen Christ? We are made “the righteousness of God in him;” but is not *this* found in the Christ as He now is and where He now is, beyond death and judgment, and not where He once was, on this earth, and before He took the place of our substitute on the cross?

Ages ago there was a law given by Moses, which claimed from man the *human* righteousness requisite for God to walk with His people Israel upon this earth. But now we know divine righteousness, in the person and title of the Son of man, who has gone up to God in the heavens, our dwellingplace too—the “Father’s house.” In what righteousness has God “made us to be in Christ?”

There is but one answer and it is plain and triumphant: “We are made the righteousness *of God in him.*”

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In conclusion: if we think of our sins, we must look back at the vacant cross and the empty sepulchre, and we shall be peaceful and happy; but when we think of divine righteousness, we must look up into the heavens and see Jesus, and we shall be contented and rejoicing!

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THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

WHAT IS POWER, AND HOW ARE  
MEANS TO BE USED?

To the earnest and true-hearted servant of Christ no question can be of deeper interest than, What is power, and how are means to be used?

It is not only in the first part of the question that the importance lies, for many are assured that power is of God; many can say, "Twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God" (Psalm lxii. 11), who cannot reply to the second, which is really the one which exercises the heart before Him, and in which we all so fail. Let us search and see how means may be used, consistently with

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the assured sense that power is of God only.

It is very instructive to mark how the servant of God in every age used means; and if before the death of Christ, while the first man was still recognized, we can trace and discover how the means were in abeyance to the power—nay, that they were always (when the servant was walking with God) so disproportionate to the power that the source of the power was not clouded or obscured by the means, but the contrary—how much more now!

Faith always has to do with God, to whom power belongeth, and not with means; and hence I may pass over Abraham, for his life properly was one wholly of faith, and he passed through the deepest exercises known to the heart of man, reckoning on God only, apart from any means. And this is, as I may say, one's private history and walk with God. Jacob, on his return from Laban's house, has got out of *faith*, and is full of means. In the wrestling, he is taught the power of God, and that if

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He be for him who can be against him? Every devoted saint knows that God's resources are outside and beyond the means he could use, and has found it so; but when the servant of God testifies of Him to His professing people, the means are used to express the power. The servant is himself an instrument; and it will be seen that, while he has full confidence in the power, he, in proportion as he is in spirit with God, makes a very secondary account of the means. Moses is not eloquent. Aaron supplies the deficiency, because Moses considered it one, but it is the rod of *Moses*, used in faith, which is the means to manifest the power of God. With that rod he stretched out his hand over the waters of the Red Sea, and that simple movement—that very insignificant means—effected the mightiest of results. He was not thinking of the means, but of the power: and this is faith always. The power is most before the soul when the means are most insignificant. Moses failed, grievously failed, and forfeited the land, when in

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Numbers xx. he made much of the means. God had directed him to “take the rod, and to *speak* unto the rock, and it shall give forth his water;” instead of which he smote the rock *twice*, and said, “Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?” He spoke unadvisedly with his non-eloquent lips; he failed to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the children of Israel. The more God is with His people, the smaller and the simpler are the means used. Jericho fell down after it had been compassed seven days. The only means used were, that the people “shouted with a great shout.” Ai, on the contrary, is only reduced by an ambuscade. Means were used, but of no honour to the prowess of Israel; and, though ordered of God, not declarative of His intervention. He graciously delivers, even after failure, but He does so without conferring honour on *themselves*, or open favour from *Himself*.

We see in the book of Judges, when “Bochim” (see chap. ii. 1) represented the state of Israel, that the means used

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for the people's deliverance from time to time were not honouring to man, though they were made to accomplish the desired end. Ehud's knife (chap. iii.), Shamgar's ox goad, Jael's nail and hammer, Gideon's pitcher, are means imparting no distinction to the users of them; yet they were effective, and rather obscured than exhibited the power by which deliverance was effected. The greater the failure, the less can God honour His people personally. How could He? But He delivers; and while He does so, He will make use of means in no wise honouring to us, and yet at the same time, not openly indicative of His intervention. When there is Nazarite separation, as in Samson, there is personal strength; and the jaw-bone of an ass—very insignificant means—will accomplish great results. But when, as in Samuel, there is *prayer*, a simple and unequivocal turning of the heart to God only, then the Lord Himself acts for His people in marked intervention: "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines

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drew near to battle against Israel; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them." (1 Sam. vii. 10.)

Now I turn to the Apostle Paul, the pattern of all them who shall believe on Him to life everlasting, as our example. If any one has meditated before God on the examples I have furnished from scripture, he cannot fail to see that the more faith and holiness in walk there is, the less the visible means, and that the means never, even in appearance, assume the place of the power, except when God cannot connect His power with the state of failure in which His servant or His people are found. Paul glories in what Moses deplores, even that he has not personal power; "in bodily presence weak, and in speech contemptible." He glories in it, because he would not have the faith of the saint to stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. He actually takes pleasure in infirmities, that the power of Christ might be fully manifest, as entirely apart from any

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co-operation which human effort could contribute to it. And hence he will judge of others, not by their speech but by their power. He reminds the Corinthians that he personally sought and derived nothing from the flesh, when first he preached to them; and if he in his preaching disallowed the flesh and its co-operation, how could they venture to glory in it? He says, "I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ" (a known living Person truly); but as to this scene, a crucified one; and he adds, "I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling (1 Cor. ii.)—the very opposite to any exhibition of human ability or sensationalism. For he continues, "My speech and preaching was not with persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

When he would restore the Galatians to the true ground of the Spirit, he not only insists (chap. i.) on the nature and order of his conversion, as being from God in His Son; but he reminds them that he did not minister among them



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in any carnal power, but on the contrary, "Ye know," he writes, "how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first." These statements are very conclusive, and establish that the more we are in the power of God's Spirit, the less shall we seek or use the co-operation derived from the flesh. Man in mind and body is the earthen vessel; the instrument for Christ's service, which, when *simply* given to Him, He uses. But my faith ought not to be in the exertion of either one or both, but in the Spirit of God. Nay, the more faith I have, the less value shall I place in any bodily or mental exertion. This would not prevent me from being always assiduous, while it would check excitement, and disallow anything that would promote it. Nay, it is well known that there cannot be general assiduity where there is even occasional overtaking; for there cannot be any accelerated action without a correspondent reaction. Now where there is power, earnestness is always apart from anything sensational

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or excited. See the earnestness of a physician by a sick bed; of a good father expostulating with a beloved but wilful son. The sense of power and the greatness of the stake at issue, when together, impart earnestness and gravity. The greatness of the stake at issue *without* the sense of power to meet it, must, when there are right feelings, provoke undue declamation and impassioned expression to supply the sense of power, and this in proportion as the former exists without the latter. The means of expressing the power are reduced and uncalled for, according as the power is felt to be possessed. Hence, wherever there is an assured sense of being led by the Spirit to any place or work (as for instance Paul to Philippi), there would be a waiting on God and a discountenancing of any questionable publicity. One would go on quietly, assured of God, in the mind of the Lord, though unknown and unheard of. Alas! now-a-days no room is left for the option of God's Spirit; but the flesh is actually fostered and given a place to, at the

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very time that the truth and grace presented, condemns it, and invites the soul to safety in Christ from the judgment on it.

Let the saints, I repeat, be assured that as there is faith and holiness, so will there be a consciousness of God's power by and through very insignificant means; and it will be found that it has not been a long, excited sermon; which has been blessed to souls, but some little word guided by God's Spirit, which has carried to the heart the germ of life.



“MANIFOLD MORE IN THIS  
TIME.”

THERE is no true and earnest soul who does not feel more and more the unsuitableness of everything here with the life of Christ, and its proper sphere; and as there is love to the Lord, the sense of this unsuitableness increases; and as we are able to bear it, or need it, there are painful exercises or trials—like milestones or signs of the zodiac—to mark

## MANIFOLD MORE IN THIS TIME. 221

our course, which fix it in our remembrance, as a Marah or a Meribah. Every stage of Israel's journey in the wilderness had a meaning in it. All works to one end here (see Eccles. vii. 14): that man should find nothing after him; and hence it is well that one should feel and accept fully the exercise or trial which leads one to see the insufficiency or unsuitableness for the Christian in everything here. It does not come all at once. One line of things *at one time* is found out as insufficient and unsuitable, and another at another time. Abram finds Mesopotamia will not do, *then* Egypt will not do, *then* Ishmael will not do. Varied exercises and trials are connected with each, but he finds what is of man will not suit God; nor will they suit him, if he would walk with God. I think we ought to pass through no trial or sorrow here without finding a distinct relative compensation with Christ; that is, a compensation in keeping with the suffering here, which had disclosed to us the insufficiency of man: and it is a

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great loss and an evidence of ~~in~~subjection to Christ, when the misery is before one's eye every day, haunting one like a ghost, to one's continual fret and disturbance. Surely it is the compensation which should engage our hearts; and then, if the trials be many and sore, the compensations would be many and great. The successful miner of gold speaks not so much of his toil as of his success. The nugget is the trophy; and the toil in obtaining it is forgotten in the enjoyment of possessing it.

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## THE GREAT SHEPHERD.

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"I sat under his shadow with great delight; and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

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SWEET to trace His toiling footsteps  
 Here amidst the desert sands;  
 Bear in memory all His sorrow,  
 Thorn-clad head, and piercèd hands!  
 Learn His love beside the manger—  
 Learn it on the stormy wave,  
 By the well, and in the garden—  
 Learn it by the cross and grave!

## \* THE GREAT SHEPHERD.

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Yet not only in remembrance  
 Do we watch that stream of love :  
 Still a mighty torrent flowing  
 From the throne of God above:—  
 Still a treasure all uncounted—  
 Still a story half untold,  
 Unexhausted, and unfathomed—  
 Fresh as in the days of old.

Christ, at God's right hand (unwearied  
 By His people's tale of sin),  
 Day by day and hour by hour  
 Welcoming each wanderer in ;  
 On His heart, amidst the glory,  
 Bearing all our grief and care,  
 Every burden, ere we feel it ;  
 Weighed and measured in His prayer.

Fragrant thus with priestly incense,  
 Every want and sorrow tells—  
 Thoughts that fill the heart of Jesus  
 In the glory where He dwells.  
 All His love, His joy, and glory,  
 By His Spirit here made known,  
 Whilst that Spirit bears the sorrow  
 Of His saints before the throne.

And the One who felt the sorrow,  
 Pleads before the Father's face,  
 Knowing all the needed solace,  
 Claiming all the needed grace.

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We, so faithless and so weary,  
Serving with impatient will;  
He, unwearied in our service,  
Gladly ministering still.

Girded with the golden girdle,  
Shining as the mighty sun,  
Still His pierced hands will finish  
All His work of love begun:  
On the night of His betrayal,  
In the glory of His throne,  
Still with faithful patience washing  
All defilement from His own.

When the Father's house resoundeth  
With the music and the song—  
When the bride in glorious raiment  
Sees the One who loved so long—  
Then for new and blessed service  
Girt afresh will He appear,  
Stand and serve before His angels  
Those who waited for Him here.

He who led them through the desert,  
Watched and guided day by day,  
Turned the flinty rocks to water,  
Made them brooks beside the way—  
He will bring them where the fountains  
Fresh and full spring forth above,  
Still throughout the endless ages  
Serving in the joy of love.

# PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

## PART VI.

### MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS.

THERE is a characteristic of Christianity which stamps it as divine in its origin. First displayed in the Lord Himself, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, we see it exemplified in a greater or less degree, in proportion as grace acts on the heart, in the lives of His followers. “I am among you as one that serveth,” was the gracious declaration on His part, abundantly illustrated in His life and even death. “Whoever among you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all,” was the line marked out by the Master for His disciples to follow. Service, the fruit of love, characterized Him: service, as a labour of love, should be manifested by them.

A marked feature of the law given to Israel, was strict justice. Their intercourse with each other was to be characterized by righteousness. “An eye



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for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," spoke of stern justice. None could complain of it, though all at times might feel the inconvenience of it. Justice demanded the eye, &c., and the man must surrender it. A marked feature of Christianity is grace, to be manifested in that self-sacrificing service exhibited in the saints of apostolic days. What no law could rightly demand, that none of them would willingly withhold. Under the law, men looked to requite, and to be requited. Under grace, saints should desire to bestow. The law of God was a Jew's authority for demanding justice from his neighbour. The example of God's Son is the Christian's guide in manifesting love to his brother. Divine love is unselfish. It thinks of others—it serves others—it enriches others. "I seek not," writes Paul to the Corinthians, "yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." This was the expression of

genuine love going out after its object, whether the affection be reciprocated or not. The spirit of Christ we see it to be, the spirit too in which God has acted to the world. And neither time nor circumstances wrought a change in Paul's mind on this point. What he was in Macedonia, when he wrote these words to the Corinthians, that he was in Rome, when suffering imprisonment on behalf of the Gentiles. To the Philippians he wrote, "Yea, and if I be offered (poured out as a libation) on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." (Chap. ii. 17.) "Communicating in his affliction"—they had sent help to Paul by Epaphroditus. He regarded it as a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God; and now that they had, as they were able, taken part in the work with him, he was ready, if need be, to be poured out as a libation on the sacrifice and service of their faith. He had spoken before (chap. i. 25) of his conviction that he would live, but only to serve and minister to others. He desired to depart and to be with Christ,

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but cheerfully remained on earth for their furtherance and joy of faith. Yet if death was to follow, he expressed himself ready for it. He had a desire and he stated it. He had no will of his own in the matter, so could seek the welfare of others. If he lived, it was for service. If he died, it would be as a libation poured out on the sacrifice. Whether life or death was his immediate portion, he was content. Happy Paul, we may surely say, to be thus willing to live or die, as the glory of God and the wellbeing of His saints required.

But here he speaks of death only as a contingency. "If I be," &c. Could he face the certainty of it with the same equanimity? Further on in his career, when admonished that his end was near, we find the same spirit that characterized him in his earlier days manifested still. Again at Rome, and this time for death, he writes of it to Timothy as certain. "Make full proof of thy ministry; for I am ready to be offered [rather, I am already being poured out as a libation] and the time of my depar-

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ture is at hand." Between his first and second imprisonment at Rome he had not changed. To spend and be spent for others was still his joy. And in accordance with this spirit he could deprive himself of the presence and service of Epaphroditus, if thereby the Philippian saints should be comforted. The prisoner at Rome would gladly resign one of his few comforts that they should be made glad. So, caring for them, not for himself, he sent Epaphroditus back to them, that they might be comforted, and he be the less sorrowful. Many were the sorrows which pressed on him in his prison, yet he could think of the sorrows of others; and if theirs were removed, his were lightened.

But not only in Paul was this spirit displayed, Epaphroditus shewed it likewise. He, too, had received the spirit of Christ, and exhibited it. He could risk his life for Paul, he could be filled with heaviness for the Philippians. For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding (or, as most read, venturing) his life, to supply their lack

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of service towards Paul. Though brought down nigh to death, from his labours in Rome, his unselfish love for others was not quenched. The Philippians he heard were sorrowful at the report of his sickness; he was immediately full of heaviness that they had heard it.

A third example of the same spirit is introduced in this chapter. Timothy sought not his own; he, too, cared for others, and shewed that spirit of subjection and affection manifested in perfection in One only—the Son of God. “Ye know the proof of him,” wrote the apostle, “that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.” Filial obedience combined with cheerful service was exhibited in Timothy. Counting on him, knowing him, Paul hoped shortly to send him unto them. For, unselfish in his behaviour towards and with Paul, he would also interest himself in others. “I have no man like-minded,” was the apostle’s judgment of him, “who will naturally (or, with genuine feeling) care for your

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state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Here the secret comes out. It was not mere natural amiability of character, but a heart which sought for the things of Christ, which made Timothy such a valuable and true servant.

Such were the companions Paul wrote of in the Epistle to the Philippians, men of a congenial spirit, like-minded with himself, because caring with him for the Lord and the Lord's work. There are, however, others mentioned, of whom it can be said, they did what they could. God took notice of their work, and the Spirit has recorded it. For, done to the saints as saints, it was done to Christ, and so was precious in God's sight. The Hebrews had ministered to the saints, and continued to do so. They had compassion of those in bonds. (Heb. vi. 10.) Such service was not, it will not be, forgotten. Onesiphorus, when in Rome, sought Paul out very diligently, though all of Asia had turned away from him. He, who had formerly ministered to him at Ephesus, continued unwearied in this

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service still. Though a prisoner, he was not ashamed to own him, and the apostle, who could help others, received refreshment from this humble yet true servant of Christ. (2 Tim. i. 16.) No difficulty did Onesiphorus allow to stand in his way. He sought Paul out, and that diligently. How the Lord loves to dwell on the acts of His servants ! Aquila and Priscilla, too, hesitated not to endanger their lives to save Paul's (Rom. xvi. 4); and Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus contributed, when at Ephesus, to refresh the apostle, ministering to his wants it would appear.

But not only was service rendered to those in bonds, or to such as laboured hard for the Lord; there were other opportunities for exhibiting the Spirit of Christ. Whilst Stephanas was refreshing Paul at Ephesus, his household at Corinth had addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. (1 Cor. xvi.) Those too who had houses suitable opened them for the service of the Church. Some, as Philemon at Colosse

(Philem. 2), and Nymphas at Laodicea (Col. iv. 15), threw them open for the assembly to meet in. In this work Aquila and Priscilla took part. At Corinth they had opened their house for this purpose (1 Cor. xvi. 19), and, when they removed to Rome, saints there found a suitable room under their roof. (Rom. xvi. 5.) Others, where such a service was not needed, welcomed brethren and strangers within their doors. Gaius, of Corinth, was Paul's host, and the host of the whole Church (Rom. xvi. 23), shewing true and large-hearted hospitality to all who had need of it. Another Gaius, in Asia probably, acted in a similar manner, receiving strangers and forwarding them on their way. (3 John.)

If these openings for service were from any cause denied them, saints could still help others, and even those at a distance. They could send of their abundance to minister to the poor (of which more hereafter); or, like Epaphras, who at home laboured fervently in prayer for the Colossians, help the



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saints of God by intercessions carried on even at a distance. (Col. iv. 12.)

Thus, whether at home or abroad, in the closet or in the household, in the prison or in the assembly, believers found a sphere of service suited to their capacity, and occupied it. Speaking a word to a prisoner for Christ's sake, giving a bed to a saint, helping labouring servants on their way, throwing open their houses for the accommodation of the assembly, or on their knees in their chamber alone on behalf of others; in these, and in various other ways, doubtless, service for the Lord's sake was carried on. Nothing was too small to be noticed, even the washing of the saints' feet, so grateful to travellers in hot countries, the Spirit of God can mention. Grace had made them prodigal of what they had, and they freely gave of it for the glory of the Lord and the comfort and sustainment of His people.

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## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Chap. ii. 23—iii.)

WE have seen how, in the previous scenes of this chapter, man is proved as utterly incapable, either in his own condition, or in his relation to God; and hence we read, in verses 23, 24, that, though many believed on His name when they saw the miracles which He wrought, Jesus did not trust Himself to them, because He knew all men, and He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. Man as he is, is hopelessly irreparable. The addition of mercies only make him sensible of his inability to reach any permanent enjoyment; and the most impressive ceremonials for leading man to God (as were the temple services), only betrayed that there was nothing in the heart of man to work on. To present them to him was to cast pearls before swine; the house of God was so little valued, that it was now a den of thieves.

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Now, in chapter iii. is unfolded to us how man—his state hopeless in itself—is created anew. The new man, as to its order and nature, is set before us. The former has been found to be utterly incapable of improvement; and God now in His grace brings in an entirely new man; and here the Lord instructs the Jewish teacher (a sample of the true-hearted in the human system) in this great truth, and the manner of it. It is emphatically and most authoritatively stated: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except any one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” If this is not seen, there is no right intelligence. If the first man be not incapable, why introduce another? But if he be, nothing is plainer than that there must be a new birth, if man is to be quickened and raised to a high estate. If a new birth be not admitted, there is no beginning at the root, and no idea of what is needed; and so needed, that there is no remedy unless with this beginning. Nicodemus may reason in his natural mind as to the impossibility of a new

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birth; but by his reasoning he shews that he comprehends the literal meaning and force of the Lord's words; and his difficulty in understanding how it could be, only leads to a more emphatic and full declaration from the Lord, namely, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except any one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The thing is plain: the first man is so irremediable, that if God deals with him in grace, there must be a new order; an order which will suit the kingdom of God where God reigns; a birth by water and of the Spirit: by the word of God, the result of atonement, and by the Holy Ghost; marking the new order, as of the Spirit, and not of the flesh.

The grace of God has provided for man, utterly incapable in himself, a new order, not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. It is of immense importance to be simple and clear as to the order in which grace meets and quickens the first man.

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It is not only that the first man is under the judgment of death, he is also, as we have seen, incapable of amendment; and therefore, to introduce a better element into the old order, would be to put a new piece on an old garment; new wine into old bottles. The old order is under judgment, therefore it is set aside, and must be; hence, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up." The old man must end in judgment, and the Son of man must be lifted up; and this in order that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Instead of His applying remedial measures for the renovation of the race of the first man, He is to be lifted up in judgment—to die on the cross—to give up the life of man—before the restoration can be brought in. But judgment being executed on the Son of man, God can give to every believer another life, even everlasting life—the life of His Son. This is the heavenly thing of which our Lord speaks to Nicodemus. Man must be born anew,

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under any circumstances; otherwise he could not enter into the kingdom of God. But not this only. The life now given to the new creature, is not the life which could be forfeited, but an *everlasting life*, brought in by the Son of God—a man here, bearing the judgment on man. God now imparts, to every one believing in the Son, another life, viz., the life of the Son. The new order of man is of the Spirit, and not of the flesh; the new birth is effected by water and the Spirit; and the life of this new creature is the life of the Son of God, who bore the judgment which rested on the first man. He imparts His own life to every one of the lost race (whose judgment He bore) who believes in Him. All rests on this blessed One. He would not commit Himself to man as he was; but He bears the judgment which rested on man, and now He is the source of every blessing to man.

But it is not only the order and style of the new creation in Christ that I get here. (Ver. 19.) He is the light, and

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everything is exposed by Him. The lover of darkness refuses Him, and this is the judgment: Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. But he that doeth truth (who accepts things as they really are) comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. Thus Christ morally determines everything. He is the Light, and He exposes the darkness—all that is not of Himself. This is an important link. He does not impart the blessing of life only, and allow everything to go on as before. No! He is the expositor of everything here, the test of every one; and hence He seals the judgment of the lovers of darkness, and is the rallying point of the doers of truth.

The next link to notice is, that He who comes from above is above all. (Ver. 31.) He who comes from heaven is above all. The origin of the blessed Saviour is here a link of the deepest interest and value; it gives breadth and supreme scope to His mission. And,

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finally, in verse 35, we have, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hands." He is not only above everything, but everything is in His hands. And hence the conclusion, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: but he that is not *subject* to the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." (Ver. 36.)

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## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

## THE IMITATION OF TRUTH.

THE more fully and distinctly truth is circulated and accepted, the more must it be the device of Satan to counterfeit it, and then beguile souls from that (the truth) which alone sanctifies unto God. If truth were not known and accepted, the counterfeit would be useless; but in proportion as the true and the real is valued, so does Satan seek to counteract it by an imitation; for if souls are led away by the imitation, under the idea that it is the truth, the conscience is



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lulled, and they are a prey to the serpent. They are not only unsanctified, but they are led astray, under Satanic influence. We ought not to be ignorant of his devices. It is plain that as a truth prevails, and souls through the power of it are delivered from darkness and the power of Satan, the enemy must not only oppose the circulation of it, which he does in the first instance; but we find that he also institutes something bearing a resemblance to it, in order to deceive souls, and lead them into his snare; while under the impression that they are adhering to the right. The children of Israel were forbidden to make any similitude (Deut. iv. 15—20) of God. Man's similitude could not rise higher than man himself. Satan from the first beguiled man from the worship of the true God unto the worshipping of demons, and the idols were only the representation of the ideas which were sanctioned by the demons.

We have to do with the simple fact, that as truth was presented and effective, so was it an object to Satan, not

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only to oppose it, but when it had gained acceptance, to set up a counterfeit, in order to create a diversion. The apostle in 2 Timothy distinctly warns us, that as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so would there arise teachers in the last days who would resist the truth, after the same fashion. By imitating the truth of God, they would withstand it. Hence, it is the duty of the faithful to be prepared for the counterfeit of every truth which has obtained acceptance and influence, and just in proportion as it has. And this with the conviction that Satan does not resort to this device until every other opposition to the truth has failed to check its progress; so that the very existence of the counterfeit is proof positive that the truth has been effective. Satan's most daring act will be seen in his setting up Antichrist—a counterfeit of Christ as Messiah and King — man in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God. “Many (says our Lord) shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive

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many, and if it were possible the very elect."

Well then, as assured that there will be, and is, an effort of Satan to rival by imitation the truth which through mercy has most effect in our day, let us, as prepared for it, consider how we may detect the counterfeit. The proper and simple way to be preserved from any counterfeit is by accuracy of knowledge of the true. If a banker has accurate knowledge of a true note, he is able to discover any discrepancy. The first great thing is to be assured of possessing the truth—to "continue in the things thou hast learned, and hast been assured of." This is really the course for oneself; but one has often to point out and expose to others the counterfeit; and therefore it is well to bear in mind that the counterfeit always gives the prominence to man. Satan always uses man as his instrument for contravening the purposes of God. Man being made in the image of God, Satan finds him his best adapted engine for circumventing God, and diverting from

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His ways and mind. Man is thus made the rival of God, and Satan is the energy by which this terrible evil is carried out. Hence, wherever man is made prominent, the spiritual can at once pronounce that it is a counterfeit, in whatever specious way it may promise good results, and therefore to them it can have no value. Secondly, there is another mark, which is not so easy to describe or expose—one which is practically seen in the magicians of Egypt, in that they could not turn the dust into lice by their enchantments (Exod. viii. 18), though they had been able to imitate Moses and Aaron up to this point. I believe it to be simply this—that even as this miracle, being the creation of life, marked the “finger of God,” and precluded the imitation of the false prophets; so no genuine expression of life will ever be found to flow from a counterfeit. There may be a great appearance and assumption of power and devotedness; but in the activities there will be found no moral power, nothing really of the life of Christ.

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It cannot be denied, that every truth which has obtained a place, has been imitated. Popery is but a huge glaring imitation of the Church of God; and every order of the world assuming to be Christian, is also an imitation, and hence a counterfeit, because it is not the real thing. The more even the idea of a right thing obtained, so has there ever sprung up the counterfeit of it. The subject is too wide to pursue it here; but let us notice one of the counterfeits existing at this very hour, respecting a truth lately revived among the saints.

The truth that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst," has now for years been a word of strength and blessing to many; and they have, by faith in God, walked in and acted on it, thereby learning and knowing the presence of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost in their midst. This could not be without the setting aside of man, and the bringing in of the power of the Spirit of God, which is the membership and unity of all saints, i.e., the body of Christ.

It could not be a mere retreat for one-self; it must, because in the Spirit, connect us with all that is of the Spirit, by whom we are all baptized into one body. It could not be a mere meeting for convenience; and its end, the edification of the two or three who had met together. The real thing (the fundamental principle of the Church,) which the word sets forth, ensures and confers wonderful blessing; but the saints, knowing the real thing, are separated from the flesh in the power of the Spirit, by whom Christ's presence is known, and by whom they are baptized into one body. Now this simple truth, from which the greatest and most blessed results flow, is constantly imitated; and the proof that it is imitated is, that none of the blessings which, as fruits, flow from the real thing, are ever known or manifested by the imitators. It will be found that it is their own conscience, or comfort, or something of their own, which is their object, and not the *One in the midst*; and thus the gathering together bears the one sure mark of a counterfeit—

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even that *man is uppermost, and not Christ*; while the other mark can also be observed—even that though they apparently have taken a great and a true step, in accepting and adopting the great fundamental principle of the Church of God, yet that there is no advance in moral power, in the realities of life; nor any increase in the knowledge of Christ's mind, and His interests on earth. Nothing is more painfully manifest than the fact that many saints, who have avowedly sought to walk for God on earth, never advance in the knowledge of Christ or His ways. Scripture is read and dwelt on, but always with reference to one's own state, where there is conscience; and never, I may say, with reference to Christ's interests and thoughts, and hence there is no progress in the knowledge of Himself. A glance at the writings of the most earnest will authoritatively confirm this statement.

The easiest things, apparently, to imitate, involve the most serious consequences if they be imitated. It was

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easy to imitate the holy anointing oil, but to do so entailed death on the offender. (See Exod. xxx. 38.) The seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, might use the same words as Paul, but with what fearfully different results ! (Acts xix. 14.) Hence the simplicity of any proposition of divine truth does not put it the more within the reach of man. Satan's object is to divert the soul from the great and divine consequences which flow from true and accurate obedience; and he effects this by inducing man to make the attempt in a natural way—without faith—without the intervention of the power of God. Now, it is a fact, that we hear of Christians meeting for breaking of bread when it suits any given number to do so, without any reference to others in the same place; so that it is not uncommon to find two or more of those meetings in a very small place, each in independence of the other, as if there were no common bond or baptism between them. What is this but imitation? In one sense, the imitators would be far better off if the



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truth, which they imitate, had never been presented and adopted, seeing that thereby an opportunity has been given to Satan to lead into this sad and disastrous imitation. I say it is sad and disastrous, because the leaders of the imitation withstand the truth, attracting and diverting souls by the counterfeit, and thus debarring them from seeking and finding the real and the true. And while they may be constant readers of the scriptures, they are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." There is no truth of greater importance in this day, than this fundamental principle of the Church, and therefore there is none more imitated, and thus more used to perpetuate and accomplish the enemy's work. When this truth is known and adopted in the Spirit, there is a daily deepening in the counsels and interests of Christ. The Church, as His body, is fully comprehended in that membership which is alone true, even the Spirit Himself. There is through the Spirit, which is the unity of the

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body, a distinct claim on and link to every saint on earth; and a daily increasing sense of responsibility and encouragement too; so that the more truly in the Spirit any fraction walks, the more ability is there to help all others, and the more they are helped; even as it is with the natural body, when any part of it recovers from a lengthened debility, there is a re-invigoration of the whole. But when it is only the imitation that is adopted, then, as I have already said, there is never a thought above man, either in the preaching of the gospel, or ministry to the saints. Man's good is alone insisted on and sought; there is no rising into communion with Christ, in His interests, and the range of them, through the Holy Ghost on earth.

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Christendom has become a very evil place indeed; and you and I have to purge ourselves from everything inconsistent with the day of Pentecost. And we must look things in the face. If I hide my eyes from evil, I shall not purge myself from it. If I think myself above it, then it is ten to one I have the root of it in my own heart.

## THE ONE LORD.

IF I would have a single eye, I must have a single object; and if I have a single object, I must have a single eye; for this simple reason, that there is nothing in the scene to engage my eye. When I see but one object, I cannot help having but one. On the mount of glory we read (Luke ix.), "Jesus was found alone." What a moment to the soul! Could the disciples when they "looked round and saw no man save Jesus only" (Mark ix.) have been occupied with any object but with Him? When the heart is fully engaged with Him, everything else is subjective to Him; He alone fills the scene. Oh! how much happier should we be if it were always thus with us; if our eye were so fixed on the Lord Jesus that we could see only *Him*, with what ease we should walk about, having this one transcendent object elevating our souls above all lower influences; while at the same time, leading us to acknowledge everything of Him, which met us in

our way; and enabling us to meet every enemy and hindrance in the strength of the Lord of life and power, on whom our eye rested! What independence it would impart, yet what gracious consideration for all! The more Christ is known, the more He becomes the all in all to the soul.

Now there are two ways, so to speak, of learning that the Lord is only before us. It may be on the mount of glory as with the disciples in Mark ix. (and this is the higher form), or it may be on the troubled waters, the "waves beating into the ship so that it was now full," as in chapter iv. We may have fruitlessly fretted ourselves with our difficulties, and possibly strained every nerve to surmount them, before we are reduced to turn our eye exclusively to Him who was with us throughout it all—though not before us—the apparently indifferent Lord. This latter is the most common way of learning Him; the glory is the superior way, but difference of learning does not make Him different. The great thing is to learn

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Him, and it is better to learn Him *well* in the troubled ship, than only a little in the glory. The supreme gain for the soul is the blessed and peculiar distinctness of knowing Him as the ONE Lord—His name ONE!

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Would anything satisfy me less than that the very heart of the Father, as shewn toward Christ, should be shewn to me? Of all the privileges I know, the best is, for the Father to say to me, There is not a single circumstance you can find yourself in, one affection that stirs in your heart, one thought of your soul, but *I want to be the object of it*. That is just the present life of a son of God.

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It is our privilege to enter into the thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. *There* we get the flow of the affections of the renewed nature toward Him—and this is our only proper position. It is not down here in the churches I shall find the answer to my affections, but in Himself *up there*; and there is the character of the relationship between Him and me, so that He could not put me nearer.

How near is Christ to me? How near is my life to me? Where is it? Can I separate it from myself?

## WHAT WAIT I FOR?

I am waiting in the midnight,  
In the storm and on the wave,  
Not for light, nor calm, nor haven,  
Though the winds and waters rave :  
'Tis for thee I wait, Lord Jesus !  
Light and Port art thou to me ;  
Thou wondrous Sun of Glory !  
I wait—I wait for thee.

From the centre of God's glory,  
Shot forth a living ray,  
Piercing this heart's mean dwelling,  
His riches to display ;  
Charged with the revelation  
Of thee, His Son, in me ;  
And there, His own creation,  
Forming, to wait for thee.

O what a tale of wonder,  
O what a wealth of grace,  
That ray disclosed!—revealing  
God's glory in thy face ;  
Telling, how His dread judgments  
Were spent upon thy head,  
And how His glory sealed thee,  
“THE RIGHTEOUS,” from the dead.

Telling, of sin's full wages  
All borne by thee, who gave  
Thy life; then rose triumphant  
From judgment and the grave.

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Head of a new creation,  
Where "all things are of God,"  
And Death's dark reign supplanted  
By thee,—life-giving Lord!

Shewing, that realm of glory  
My birth-place—home to be;  
For thence, from thee,—its fountain,  
Life issues unto me.  
And there, e'en now, in spirit,  
Thy glory I can see;  
While, (mighty, gracious Saviour!)  
On earth, I wait for thee.

O holy, quickening Spirit,  
What wonders hast thou done!—  
To me thou hast imparted  
Life—union with God's Son.  
For Him the Father deems me  
Fit company to be;  
Thou "fulness of the Godhead!"  
I wait—I wait for thee.

So I'm waiting in the midnight,  
But my heart is in the light,  
Until faith's wondrous secret  
Be unfolded into sight.  
What more? Thyself, for ever,  
This heart's repose to be!  
My Lord—my God—my Saviour!  
I wait—I wait for thee.

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## THE HOLY GHOST.

THIS dispensation—if the Church of God may be said to belong to any, though in a certain sense *in* one—is formed by an entirely new revelation of a Triune Jehovah; or, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The Gospel of John, and more particularly chapters xiii. to xvii., not only embraces this fact, but establishes the nature of Christianity and our relations with God, upon the basis of a crucified and exalted “Son of man,” and witnessed by the promised Spirit whom the Lord would send down.

Thus this Christ, *our* Christ, departs out of this world (a way unintelligible to a Jew), to ascend into the heavens, or, in His own words, to “go to the Father.” The Holy Ghost, moreover, as Comforter, is to descend from heaven and to abide with us for ever. These two changes, from the earth to the heavens and from the heavens to the earth, by the Son and by the Holy



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Ghost, were necessary for the glory of Christ and for the display of the Father's counsels. True, not yet by manifestation in result; but in order to bring out the mystery of the Church to the members of His body, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God," and be consciously in the enjoyment of an existing relationship, through the Spirit of adoption, as children before the Father, in communion with His own love.

Man, as man in the flesh, having earned death for himself, by the abuse of every fresh manifestation of God's grace, is no longer merely an heir of death by the sin of the first Adam, nor through his own sin by the subsequent sentence of a violated law given by Moses, but by the final rejection and crucifixion of a living Christ, come down from heaven "to gather together the children of God that were scattered abroad, has earned a last and fuller title to death by the betrayal and murder of the Son of God's love.

The living ministry and work of

## THE HOLY GHOST.

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Christ in death (where man had sunk himself *thus* by his own act as well as by the judgment of God upon him) has brought us up out of this death, and, by means of the death of Him who alone could go down into it on such an errand, by blood, has now set His members in life—a new life; and, in possession of a new nature, has brought us to the Father. This being done, the Son goes to prepare a place in the house of the Father, leaving us the promise, “I will come again and receive you unto myself.”

The Holy Ghost has come down consequent on the ascension of the Son of man to the right hand of God. “If I depart, I will send him.” Moreover He is the promise of the Father.

As regards the world in this new revelation from God by the Holy Ghost, it cannot receive Him, “because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.” Moreover, “when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” Man is thus confronted by the original witness of

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“a groaning creation,” if he listens to what is around him; by the terrors of a broken law and its penalties, if he looks behind; and by the actual presence of the Holy Ghost on earth. He witnesses that righteousness is with the Father in the Person of the rejected Lord; that sin rests on the world that has done this deed; and, lastly, that judgment—the coming judgment—must settle these differences, and put all in their proper places by sovereign and absolute power.

In the meanwhile the Spirit, as the Comforter, the Paraclete, abides with the Church. “Ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” He is the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father. He shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness; moreover, He will guide you into all truth; whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come; He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shew it unto you. Precious portion for a people left for a little while on earth!

Definitely and distinctly, as to our-

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selves, do *we* enquire, By what power must the truth of this death, wrought out at the cross upon the flesh and the world, be made good and maintained in our souls? The answer is plain. It can only be by a power adequate to the great fact itself, viz., the presence of the Holy Ghost. Again, do we ask, In what power must a believer in Christ maintain his separation from the entire Mosaic economy, which morally and religiously recognized and dealt with man as in the flesh? It can only be by the power of the Holy Ghost, which detaches him from all previous institutions, which else the flesh must fall back upon, in order to sustain itself in an outward piety, by religious ordinances—as in the Ritualism of the present day. Again, How is “a new creature in Christ” to be maintained in communion and fellowship with this new revelation from God—of things kept secret from the foundation of the world—mysteries hidden in God, but now made known; because the Second Man, the Lord and Head of another

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creation and order of things, has been raised up out of death and crowned with glory and honour at the right hand of God? The doxology of Ephesians iii. will supply the answer: "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." In what power can a new nature be sustained and made capable, by its own feelings and affections, of entering into the delights suited to Christ, and according to God, for individual communion and testimony, except it be by the fellowship of the indwelling Spirit? In what power is "a man in Christ" to live and walk and act on a class of motives outside and beyond himself, but as under the anointing and "unction from the Holy One;" or to take up death, and insist upon it as necessary to himself, for the bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his body? In short,

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how can such a one, dead and risen with Christ, be a vessel of witness in the world out of which he has been taken, that he is not only not of it, but become the expression to it on all points of the principles, objects, and character of the heavens to which he belongs, and thus to shine as a light, declaring plainly that his citizenship is above, from whence also he looks for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ? All that is equal to the occasion, is found in “the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.” The adequate power which enables *us* to use death in virtue of divine life, is that which has put to death, and taken out of death, our Lord Jesus Christ, and set Him in the heavenlies.

The introduction of this new life from the risen One, and this new power in the descended One, and their joint and concurrent histories, are what fill up and form the Acts of the Apostles,

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where in detail we are taught how and when the links were finally broken with the old things; and how the bonds and relations were fashioned which unite us with the new ones, in the presence and power of the Holy Ghost.

The cross, the sepulchre, and the resurrection have witnessed to the work and victory of Christ, and consequently to His glory, and the glorification of God, in a new and not yet existing righteousness in the ascended Son to the right hand of the Father. All things and all that the Father hath are His.

Perhaps the point of greatest interest to us, if not the starting-point for Himself upon earth, is in John xx., when He takes His new place, and breathes on His disciples, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Moreover in this act He associates us with Himself after His resurrection, and puts us on the same ground and into the same relation, by adding, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

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None can stand in relationship with God except in the power of the Holy Ghost—a power which is necessary to keep that under death which has been judicially put to death at the cross, and to maintain the new creature in life which has been quickened by the Spirit for conformity to Christ whilst here on earth, and full correspondence with Him eternally in the heavens. What can set us beyond the religiousness and the corruption of the world and the flesh, but the redemption by blood and by power which has taken us out of it? What can make us equal to the requirements of another, and a new and divine creation, but the power and calling by which the Head Himself has been raised there?

In application: Where the presence and operations of the Holy Ghost in effectual sovereign power working in us are not discovered and relied on, there can be nothing but forms to turn to; and flesh being leaned on looks out in weakness or wilfulness for its old supports; and thus there is a returning

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necessarily to the former things. This tendency in the Church was even in the apostles' days; and thus we find a word of caution to the Colossians upon philosophy, science, and will-worship; or to the Galatians upon falling from grace and making a fair show in the flesh; or to the Hebrews upon the old distance of the Jewish worship in contrast with the rent vail and the heavenly calling.

Of what immense moment is it to see that God has judged man to have brought himself to an end, by the crucifixion of Christ, and that since God has publicly raised up Christ; and begun with the Second Man in the heavens, the ground on which "He makes all things new," our only possible link of connection with God, by life and death, must be with Christ, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. All else tends the wrong way, and is a going back to "the beggarly elements," and may possibly lead to perdition.

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## DISCIPLESHIP.

THE first step in discipleship, the foundation for every other step, is the assured sense of the sufficiency of Christ apart from all else before God. This is the *first* step. It is not enough that I know He is my salvation; faith in Christ as the sacrifice for sins imparts an assurance of safety from judgment and a great joy in proportion to the sense of relief—many rejoice in salvation through Christ who do not walk as His disciples.

The Lord hath plainly declared, “unless a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Now we see that there are many even happy believers in Christ who understand very little of this great renunciation. Nay, the very effort to reach it by restrictions or abstinence only proves that there has not been found in Christ Himself a clear and full deliverance from all of oneself, and at times there is an attempt to take a step further on, before the first has been learnt. Now this first step is, a

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distinct and unqualified rest in Christ, before God; the sense of being nigh to Him and set in full acceptance (even the beloved's, Eph. i. 6) in the Father's house. A happy death bed simply illustrates it, for then Christ is everything to the soul, and He assures the heart of all joy and blessing in Himself. The first step in discipleship then is of this nature. It is the revelation to the soul of Christ, so above everything and outside and apart from everything, that there is an absolute sense of His sufficiency; and thus a virtual forsaking of all one's own; and it is this only which prepares one for following Him. It is quite evident that this step is not always taken at conversion. I do not say that it could not be; nay, I see no reason why it should not, because there can be no following of Christ, or learning of Him—no discipleship, until it is known. Paul in Galatians i. tells us how it was with himself, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me. . . . . immediately

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I conferred not with flesh and blood.” How can one be a disciple of Christ while clinging to that for which He was crucified? I do not mean to assert that a disciple has none of it cleaving to him, but there is a great deal of difference between one seeing and rejoicing in being outside and apart from oneself in nature, and pleading for one’s right to remain in it. Surely there are saints who may be ranked under this latter head. The disciple must start with this—that all of himself has been crucified; and hence, that he forsakes it and now lives by Him who has risen from among the dead, in whom he has unbounded rest and joy before His God and our God; His Father and our Father. I cannot have both self and Christ. I cannot enjoy Christ risen out of judgment, as everything to me, and at the same time find anything to gratify me in that for which He was judged. It is not a question of salvation; faith in Him as the Lamb of God saves the soul, but it is a question of discipleship—of leaving all and following Him. I must find

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Him everything to me first, before I can make Him everything in my course here; and it is because souls fail in learning Him, in this blessed sufficiency (a lesson often deferred till some terrible trial or a death bed), which accounts for the low practical walk now manifested among Christians. Paul, in the light of that glory in which there was no place for himself, sees the Son of God, and finds that there, when God begins with him, is the goal for his soul, and the prize of his calling of God on high. Peter in Luke v. learns the superiority of Christ to everything, at the moment most gratifying to him as a man, even when he was exemplary in obedience and highly favoured in mercies. Paul in the glory, and Peter in the midst of things naturally attractive, each learns that Christ is superior to everything. It is not whether they will maintain this sense all through their course here; but the point of importance is, that this conviction is the start, the needle of the compass; it may indeed vacillate and falter, but it knows the magnet and its

ontrolling power. How can one really earn Christ, if one does not abide in Him? and to abide in Him, one must be outside of all that which is not of Him. Many hindrances or excuses will occur during the journey, but the point of all importance, and that which alone ensures discipleship, is this knowledge of Christ where all is sensibly done with, and He stands out before the soul in the presence of God, as the all in all. I do not speak here of the extent of this sense; I speak simply of the sense itself, as a well defined, well known, and effective thing, and that the inability in many to follow the Lord, is simply because they have not learnt Him in this peculiar superiority. No doubt one deepens in it, as one cultivates it, but the thing for the soul to ascertain is, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the ark of perfect safety and satisfaction before God, while the wave of judgment rolls over all around; as it is said of Noah when the waters prevailed on the earth, "*And the Lord shut him in.*" It is the sense of there being no help or expectation from any-

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thing that surrounds me, and this coincident with the fact that I am safe, secure, and abundantly happy in Christ, the ark, though I may have only just entered into the wondrous enclosure, I have the sense, that all is ruin outside, but all safety and rest inside.

But to explain. A soul may, like Abel, see by faith the value of Christ's sacrifice, and be assured through grace of acceptance; but this of itself is not discipleship. Enoch walking with God, gives one side of the disciple; and Noah, as in Christ, the ark—outside of the ruin and wreck here—the other side. When I, as an accepted one, walk with God, separated from all here in Christ, I am a disciple; I have entered on that path. We read that to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. Now the love for Christ is never full, until one sees that all must be abandoned for Him. He has full possession of the heart, if nothing else detains it. When all is abandoned, then His value is known. The delight of heart that a soul enjoys when first the blessedness of

salvation has been tasted of, is often put in the place of that knowledge of Christ which is the first step in discipleship. I do not deny that the first step may accompany this delight, but what I would press is, that there is a difference between this delight, however controlling, and however impelling one to the greatest acts of devotedness, and discipleship. The great mark of distinction is this—in the former, the expression of devotedness is always with reference to the present scene, it gives honour to Christ in an earthly way. Jonathan, at great personal sacrifice, made David visibly and publicly the great and distinguished one. We read, “Jonathan loved David as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.” (1 Sam. xviii.) He loved him, he delighted in him as the saviour and deliverer; for more than this he knew not of David. But Jonathan did not follow David in his rejection; and *thus*,



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*the very first step in discipleship was beyond him.* It is quite possible, like “the woman that was a sinner” in Luke vii., to break the alabaster box on Christ, with reference to His place on earth; that is, to make Him distinctly an object of earthly consideration, and yet to be far practically from the intent of a similar act in John xii. The two acts are indeed similar, but the intent of each is widely different. Mary in John xii. does it for His *burial*. She has entered on discipleship. She follows Him outside of all here, after the manner of Ruth, who, when there was no earthly inducement to follow Naomi, yea, when Naomi was rightly called Marah, follows her with a no less purpose than this: “Where thou diest, I will die, and there also will I be buried.”

Discipleship cannot be entered on, till the soul has practically passed from all that would interpose between it and Christ, and till every blind and support is supplanted by Him. By various ways this is brought about. Mary, in the

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death of Lazarus, learns in that hour, as Jesus walked with her, the sufficiency of Himself when the human prop and intervention had been removed. Wondrous blessed moment! The feet set in a large place. "Ship" and everything abandoned to walk with Him who is above everything. (Comp. Matt. xiv. with Eph. i.) Discipleship is begun.

May God in His mercy grant that there be many disciples in this day.

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 THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

## LEGALISM AND LAWLESSNESS.

THERE are two courses of action apparently contrary one to the other, but which nevertheless spring from the same root—even the flesh. One is legalism, which I may describe as the effort to shape oneself to given laws or rules; the other is lawlessness, in which one's own will determines everything. In legalism the occupation is necessarily with oneself. Seeking to urge oneself into conformity to law, self is before the eye,

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and satisfaction is felt, according as there is conformity to a given standard. Legalism must always give the flesh a place, for if there were no flesh, there would be no law. The Spirit acts according to God, and against His fruits there can be no law. If the flesh be dead, there is no need for law; for he that is dead is freed from sin. But it is not of doctrine I would speak here, but of practice. The moment legality is sanctioned, it must be with reference to that which needs to be made subject; hence, law has a relation to the flesh, and the flesh to the law; and this is just the evil of legalism—even that it addresses the flesh, and gives it a standing. And this is not christian, because as Christians we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; therefore the flesh has no standing, and in the Spirit we exhibit the fruits of the Spirit, against which there is no law.

Now lawlessness, though apparently opposite to legalism, springs from the same error; even from a misapprehension of how the flesh is regarded before

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God. Neither with the legal nor lawless is it treated as having been crucified with Christ, and because grace confers what the law exacts, the flesh assumes that it is irresponsible, and acts according to its will: and this is lawlessness. The carnal mind becomes the arbiter and leader on every point. Self, like a primeval forest, is allowed to grow and to do as it lists. In neither case is the flesh treated as a thing to be mortified—set aside—because crucified in the cross. Where there is most conscience, legality obtains; but where there is most intelligence in the natural mind, there lawlessness rules. Nevertheless, the legal man, because of weakness, is often lawless, for if he be not up to and according to rule, he must be so, even against his inclination; hence legalism is no safeguard against lawlessness, because of the weakness of the flesh; and it becomes plain that there is no true deliverance from the flesh but as I walk in the Spirit.

The Galatians were legal—the Corinthians were lawless. The Galatians,

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no doubt, conscientiously felt that the flesh intruded and trespassed upon them, and in order to check and frustrate it, they resorted to restrictions and were in bondage to rules. Having begun in the Spirit, they were seeking to be made perfect in the flesh. They had ceased to walk in the Spirit, and they essayed to control the flesh by descending to carnal methods; and thus gave a place to the flesh, which was in itself a victory to it. Instead of disallowing it, from the high eminence and control of the Spirit of God (for if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh), they fostered the very thing they wanted to check, because they thus gave it a recognized existence. The great truth is, that being alive in the Spirit, I disavow the right of the flesh to rule: in a word, that I am crucified with Christ; for if I live after the flesh, I shall die; but if I, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, I shall live. The legal man makes himself, and not Christ, his study and object, and his satisfaction is according as he succeeds

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in bringing himself to the adopted standard.

Now the Corinthians were lawless. They were richly gifted. The Spirit had bestowed on them very imposing gifts, and they virtually said, "The Spirit's gifts are everything—the flesh may do as it likes;" but the moment the flesh is let do as it likes, then it is not dead, it is alive, and it is lawless; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God; nay, it breaks out and betrays itself in many forms. If I am walking in the Spirit, I do mortify the deeds of the flesh; for the flesh cannot maintain itself in the Spirit's province. I might be largely gifted by the Spirit like the Corinthians, but this is not walking in the Spirit. When in the Spirit I am first controlled myself; but this is not all. As I walk in the Spirit, I am interested and watchful that other saints walk also according to Christ; while in lawlessness the reverse is the case—I am wilful myself and I connive at the wilfulness of others.

Let us trace a little in 1 Corinthians

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how the apostle exposes lawlessness at Corinth. First, in chapter i., he notices how they are in the flesh; because they are following their own will, in choosing leaders. And in chapter iii. he plainly tells them, that they are babes in Christ, being carnal, and walking as men. But having shewn how wilful they were in their own walk and ways, he then in chapter v. shews how utterly indifferent they were of the conduct and character of those who came to the Lord's table; nay, that they were so leavened that they went to law with one another before the ungodly; they were not under law to Christ, they did as they chose; it ran into their domestic relationships, so that it was necessary to tell them, Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. They went to idol temples and ate things offered to idols; they ate their own supper at the Lord's Supper. Every one had a psalm, &c., in the assembly. (1 Cor. xiv. 6.) Lastly, they had among them some who say that there is no resurrection of the dead! Alas! to what a lawless state

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had they come! The doctrine and power of the Spirit was accepted without the great truth of the crucifixion of the flesh! The result is the *worst* practice, for the knowledge of the Spirit's gifts and power, unless I am walking in the Spirit, only leads to lawlessness; it leads to boasting in the flesh. If I am walking in the Spirit, the flesh is forced into death before Him. The Corinthians were not legal, they did not check the flesh at all; they gloried in the gifts of the Spirit, and allowed the flesh to please itself.

These two forms of evil, which appeared so soon in the history of Christianity, have produced strange combinations in Christendom. You will find one lawless in *choosing* a leader; and then easily submitting to certain rules, as if he were quite a legalist. You will find another avowing legalism, and yet very wilful in personal habits and ways. One glories in what he can make of himself—for instance, a teetotaller; the other, is gratified by the acts of his will; thus in both



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cases there is plainly self-satisfaction. Legalism is in man in the flesh when there is conscience. Lawlessness obtains when there is a release from law if the flesh is allowed to act. Hence Paul urges "only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh;" and Peter, "as free, but not using your liberty as a cloke of maliciousness." The true ground of liberty or freedom from evil is, that I am dead to the law, by the body of Christ. If the old man has been crucified, there is no room for legalism or lawlessness; and hence the danger of relaxing the claim of the law, for it is not that God has relaxed His claim, but that which the law addresses has been crucified, and therefore it is neither to be improved, nor left at will, but to be *mortified*.

Now in these last days, we are warned that there is the form of godliness without the power thereof, and then it is that lawlessness is most marked. "Men are lovers of their own selves, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." The mystery of godliness, if received by

faith, necessarily sets man aside here. Hence the apostasy endeavoured to contravene the effect of true godliness, by introducing penance and self-denial of an extreme kind. The mystery of godliness is great, and its effects distinct in the setting aside and repudiation of the flesh because of association with Christ. Instead of bowing to the mystery of godliness, the apostasy from the faith was marked by severe impositions on the flesh, which, so far from setting aside the flesh, gave it a distinct place by avowing it as capable of correction. This has ever been the rule so long as God is admitted to have a claim, and I am in that nature which of itself resists His claim—there must either be law for that which is not subject, or there must be lawlessness. Indeed the former, legalism, paves the way for lawlessness. This we see in the case of the Colossians (though I cannot enlarge on it here), where there was a mixture of Judaism and philosophy. It was the will of the flesh, and this is sin, and sin is lawlessness.

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The great evil of Cain was in devising for himself a way to propitiate God. He was not at first lawless, but he was not subject to God's mind, and wherever insubjection creeps in, no matter how heavy and exacting the restrictions, then there is a giving rein to one's mind; and the next step, as we see in Cain, is utter lawlessness—no restraint whatever. This downward course is traced for us in Jude. We read, "They have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." First adopting self-restrictions; then acting for self-advantage; and, eventually, in open rebellion. Thus the legal, in the long-run, become lawless: they find their restrictions accomplish nothing, and then they are thrown overboard, and lawlessness ensues. The one who imposes the severest restrictions, as king Saul (1 Sam. xiv. 24), is the selfsame one who lapses into open wilfulness.

The sum of the matter is this: that beginning in the Spirit does not pre-

serve from legalism, as we see in the Galatians; and the knowledge of the Spirit's power and place in the assembly does not preserve one from lawlessness, as with the Corinthians. Nay, that the knowledge of grace tends to lawlessness, because if under grace we are not under law; and if the flesh be not mortified, because ended judicially in the cross, there will be legalism where there is conscience, which eventually lapses into lawlessness because the flesh is wicked and wilful.

The great evil among us is the Corinthian, owning and receiving the truth in the natural mind; seeing and admitting that the Spirit has the power and the right to rule; enjoying His gifts too: and yet with all this a manifest license to the flesh—a reigning as kings, and many other glaring expressions of self-will. It is from the more enlightened that the truth receives the greatest damage if there be not a practical power coincident with the possession of it. And there cannot be this practical exhibition of it, unless by

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walking in the Spirit, where alone the flesh is mortified. No amount of restriction will be true testimony, and there can be great intelligence and acknowledgment of right principles without true rule—the rule of the Spirit, who always manifests Himself by mortifying the flesh, and thus displaying His own fruits, against which there is no law.

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### MY RECEPTION.

“ IN the distant land of famine,  
     Faining with the swine to feed :  
 Oh ! how bitter that awakening  
     To my sin, and shame, and need.  
 Dark and dreary all around me,  
     Now no more by sin beguiled,  
 I would go and seek my Father,  
     Be a bondsman, not a child.

Yet a great way off He saw me,  
     Ran to kiss me as I came ;  
 As I was my Father loved me,  
     Loved me in my sin and shame.  
 Then in bitter grief I told Him  
     Of the evil I had done—  
 Sinned in scorn of Him, my Father,  
     Was not meet to be His son.

## MY RECEPTION.

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But I know not if He listened,  
 For He spake not of my sin ;  
 He within His house would have me,  
 Make me meet to enter in—  
 From the riches of His glory  
 Brought His costliest raiment forth,  
 Brought the ring that sealed His purpose,  
 Shoes to tread His golden courts.

Put them on me—robes of glory,  
 Spotless as the heavens above ;  
 Not to meet *my* thoughts of fitness,  
 But *His* wondrous thoughts of love.  
 Then within His home He led me,  
 Brought me where the feast was spread,  
 Made me eat with Him, my Father,  
 I who begged for bondsman's bread !

Not a suppliant at His gateway,  
 But a son within His home ;  
 To the love, the joy, the singing,  
 To the glory I am come.  
 Gathered round that wondrous temple,  
 Filled with awe His angels see ;  
 Glory lighting up the holiest,  
 In that glory Him and me.

There He dwells in me rejoicing,  
 Love resplendent in His face ;  
 There I dwell, in Him rejoicing,  
 None but I can know His grace.  
 To that blessed place of nearness—  
 Ground no other foot can tread—  
 He has brought the lost and found one,  
 Him who liveth and was dead.”

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This the ransomed sinner's story,  
All the Father's heart made known ;  
All His grace to me the sinner,  
Told by judgment on His Son.  
Told by Him from depths of anguish,  
All the Father's love for me ;  
By the curse, the cross, the darkness,  
Measuring what that love must be.

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Occupy your mind, set your thoughts on Christ ; and God will take care that you find Him attractive to your affections.

Make but His glory your concern ; He will make your wants His care.

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The white earth-fog may rise to wrap me round ; but it cannot cloud *Him*, up there in the Father's glory above it all. It cannot wrap *Him* round, and my life is hid with Christ in God ; and here, in this scene, where we see death everywhere, we raise one song (the song of eternal life) to Him who died and rose again to sit at God's right hand for us.

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The supply is from the Head. If the power be known, not for us but in us, it must produce an effect ; and the effect is *out of earth, out of man* (as man is), and in Him a new man. Hence, in every relationship here, there is a heavenly colour ; it is not only that I must not do so-and-so, but I must have the colour of Christ. There is the supply—the effect and the practice.

# PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

## PART VIII.

### THE SERVICE OF WOMEN.

“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet for him,” [*lit.* a help as his counterpart] was the first announcement of the Lord Jehovah relative to woman’s creation, and the place she was designed to fill. Brought by God to Adam, she took her place at his side, as the helpmeet of God’s providing. The fall came, and she, who was created to be man’s partner, was in consequence to be subject to her husband’s rule. From Eden they went forth, with the original relation between man and woman unchanged, and the subjection to her husband in consequence of her sins unreversed. She was, she is, man’s helpmeet, however much the original reason of her creation has been lost sight of.

From the fall to the cross we hear nothing of woman’s right place in creation. The heathen had degraded her



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into being man's slave. By the law she was protected from being trampled on under certain circumstances (Exod. xxi.; Lev. xviii. 18); yet she never had, under the Mosaic economy, her proper place with man. But after the manifestation of the Second man, and the accomplishment of His work of atonement, the original order of creation is again adverted to, and woman regains her true place with man.

As the glory of man, she has her place by his side, who is the image and glory of God. And, though in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, it must ever be remembered that the distinction of sexes, and God's own order of creation respecting them whilst on earth, remains ever the same. "The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man." Yet she is not to be treated as inferior to man, unfit to be his companion, unsuited for his helpmeet; for "as the woman is of the man, so is the man by the woman." Taken out of man at the first, man ever since has been indebted to her for his existence

on earth. How these simple statements of the word, if duly pondered, would teach both their true place in relation to each other; and, delivering the woman from that misdirected energy we see around us, lead her to fill that place intended for her by God. In personal service she finds her peculiar sphere, as in public ministry and rule the man has his place; for, the head of the woman being the man, she is not to dishonour her head (i.e., the man) by obliterating the distinction between them; her hair given her for a covering being a standing proof, as we learn from scripture (1 Cor. xi.), of woman's due subjection to man. Into what minute points can the Spirit enter, commenting even on woman's hair, when God's order is contravened, or the welfare of God's saints imperilled.

In personal service she finds her special sphere; so when the Lord was on earth, whilst He chose His apostles, and the seventy disciples, and gave them authority respectively to go out and preach, He accepted the uncommanded

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and unasked ministrations of women. They ministered to Him of their substance. (Luke viii. 3.) He called His disciples to public service, and made them distribute the bread as they received it from Him. He received the proffered service of women, and was ready, though Lord of all, to be indebted to them for the supply of His own and His disciples' bodily wants. As love prompted, they rendered this service, and He as readily accepted it. After His departure we find men as sent by Him were engaged in preaching and teaching, whilst women found an ample sphere in personal service in their families, among the saints, or in helping those who were labouring in the work of God.

Do any ask what were the family duties of christian women whether young or old? We have only to turn to Timothy and Titus to find out. (1 Tim. v. 14; Titus ii. 3—5.) If we desire to know how faithful women of old employed themselves, we have several examples handed down to us in the

word. The married woman had duties to her husband and children, besides engaging in any labour of love for the saints or the Lord. The unmarried were more free to devote themselves to the things of the Lord. Beyond the range of family ties the sympathies of both could extend themselves. In Jerusalem, Mary, the mother of John, opened her house for prayer on that memorable evening when Peter was miraculously brought out of prison. At Philippi Lydia of Thyatira hospitably entertained Paul and his company, whilst the elect lady of 2 John received into her house those brethren that went about ministering the word. Then there was Mary who bestowed much labour on Paul, and the women at Philippi who laboured (rather contended or wrestled) with him in the gospel. There were Tryphena and Tryphosa who laboured in the Lord, and the beloved Persis who laboured much in the Lord. These holy women, living in that age, and working under the immediate eye of the apostles, found plenty of scope for

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their energies, and plenty of opportunities for working for their Lord, without forgetting their true place with reference to their head. It was no idle life with them. They were in earnest: they were active. Mary, like her namesakes of the gospel, was forward in personal service: Persis laboured much, and those women of Philippi worked zealously with Paul. Exactly what each did is not recorded. Can we not see a reason for this? The service of love may vary in different places and different ages. What is needed at one time may not be needed at another. To wash the feet of the traveller in the East is grateful to the wayworn one; in the West such service is not required. Had the special work of each been enumerated, other kinds of service, rendered so willingly and accepted gratefully, might have been thought unsuited for devoted, godly women. The special work of one is recorded—a labour in season as much in our day as in that of Peter—Tabitha made garments and coats. Of others it is only recorded that they

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laboured much. These received the commendation of the apostle, and along with Tabitha have their names preserved in the inspired record. Theirs was service done for the Lord's sake and accepted by Him.

For those who could engage in a wider field of service than the home circle, or such work as Mary took up, opportunities did not fail them. They might expend time, means, and strength in serving more directly the Church. Phebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, "a succourer of many, and of myself also," as Paul writes, is an example of such. Probably a person of means, from his description of her, with time, too, at her disposal. She had allotted herself to ministering to the wants of the church at Cenchrea, and the need of individuals who might visit it. Others found a different yet equally wide sphere in which to manifest their womanly devotedness and true love to them. The labours of such are described in 1 Timothy v. 10. Following the example of the

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Master they found no service too menial if done to His saints for His sake. How refreshing to see the activity of love displaying itself in these different ways. Love is inventive and fertile in resources, and adapts itself to all that is required.

In these different ways did christian women find abundant occupation. Real work, healthy activity, untiring devotion, was found perfectly compatible with due subordination to her head, and keeping in the place assigned her by God. As man's helpmeet she found work to be done. At home, abroad, or in the Church, women found a place which otherwise would have been but indifferently provided for; and she performed duties, suited to her nature, which none but those of her sex could so well discharge. As in Eden, so now in the work of the Lord, and in care of the saints, as well as in domestic life, the helpmeet God provided is the fitting help still. Eve was not wanted to take Adam's place, but to be his help. She was not a substitute but a partner. So women laboured with Paul

in the gospel, but not in Paul's place. Here, however, we are touching on a question which must be postponed to another time. We have briefly shewn what women did; we hope to point out what they were forbidden to undertake.

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“ T H Y   W A Y . ”

(Exod. xxxiii.)

MOSES says, “ If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee.” He does not say, Shew me a way across the wilderness, that I may get into Canaan. That will not do for the earnest heart that has got God. When I have found grace, I must have God's own way; nothing else will do. We have to follow Christ: He is God's way, the only way. Here he is speaking of a soul going through the world. Is there only one desire in your heart? and is that desire to find God's own way in this world that has rejected Christ, and that you may be found walking in that way? It is not



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seeking to get safe through the world, and saying, "What harm is there in this or that?" but following Christ, and He says, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." There was not any imperfection in Him, but always a growing apprehension of God; the more He grew the more there was for the Father to delight in. And now Christ, who is in the perfectness of divine favour, can say of you, The more he grows into conformity to my image, the more my Father loves him. "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." There is the present enjoyment of the light of God's countenance, an intelligent delight in doing His will.

Moses was conscious that God knew him by name, that God's eye was upon him individually. "Shew me now thy way, that I may know thee." The Lord at once answers, "My presence shall go

with thee, and I will give thee rest." There is the complete answer.

Rest has a double character. The Lord was looking at the whole world rejecting Him, and says, Come unto me, and I will *give* you rest; then He adds, Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall *find* rest unto your souls. The meek and lowly in heart, the one whose will is broken, finds a *present* rest: the full rest was in Canaan. In the world ye shall have tribulation; in me ye shall have peace: peace of heart because you have Christ instead of will; a thwarted will is unrest, but *Christ instead of will* is perfect rest.

God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, and given His Son for us; but it is important to see that His government goes on. He will bring chastening for my faults even now upon me. Accepted in the Beloved, we stand in all the value of Christ before God. Moses says (and it is found all through the chapter), If now I have found grace in thy sight, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us, *for it is a stiffnecked people.*

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The Lord had said (chap. xxxiii. 5) that they were a stiffnecked people and He would consume them for it; but Moses presents this to God as the very reason why He should go with them. Moses will not let God off, so to speak; he calls them *His* people, and says, “If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.” Never let us be content without having God with us. “How should it be known that we are thy people, or that we have found grace in thy sight, if thou go not with us?” How should it be known but by the presence of God the Holy Ghost in us? If we are in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, it is known that we are God’s people. But we must know how completely judgment is gone and we in divine favour, before we can ask God to go with us. If you know that you have found grace in His sight, you know the righteousness of God, you can look for Him to be with you; you know your heart is such that you must get God to go with you, and be your strength against the world. Man—the sinner—

cannot get out of God's presence, and he cannot stand in it. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? whither shall I flee from thy presence?" You cannot see the glory and live. Moses says, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." And God tells him to go up into the mount, and He will make all His goodness pass before him: there is no meeting God until He has passed by in the death of Christ. I cannot meet His glory in His face; but I know it now—it is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. It required a divine Person who could meet the cup of wrath. He alone could, and God is glorified in Him. God glorified Him as a man. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." No one else could say this. He goes up as man into the glory. I see the man who bore my sins in judgment on the cross, now in glory; and every ray of glory in His face tells me that my sins are gone, so that I can gaze upon the glory.

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Christ was before God on the cross according to all that I had done. I am before God in the glory according to all that Christ has done.

Have you found out your complete acceptance, so that all the evil in your heart can be opened out in God's presence? Think of a man asking God to look well into his heart. "Search me, O God, and know my heart." If you have found what Christ is, you can look to God to be with you. Is there that singleness of eye which says, Shew me thy way that I may walk therein? Is that all you are doing in this poor world of vanity—seeking to know God's way through it, and to walk therein? Whatever dims the spiritual eye, hides it from you.

Nothing tests the state of my heart like the capacity to intercede for others. If I am not walking aright, I must pray for myself; but if I am in communion with God, I can pray for His people.

The Lord give us to know something of the mind of Christ as He walked

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through the world; the path in which He walked and the way He cared for His people.

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## THE CHAIN OF TRUTH IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Chap. iv.)

IN the former chapter, we have seen the manner and order of our new creation, through and by the Son of God: we are next taught the extent and greatness of His gift; how man's condition is affected by it; and, consequently, the nature of our relations with God. We have seen, in chapter ii., that man in himself is incapable of retaining blessings, however suited to him; that all ends in vanity and vexation of spirit; and that man in his relation to God is a scandal; the house of God made a den of thieves! Here, then (chap. iv.), is the most marked contrast to all this. The Lord encounters a woman of Samaria, having no position, either by birth or conduct, and tells her that what He gives is, be-

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yond all comparison, superior to anything in this world. She represents our nature in its true estate in this world, needing refreshment and sustainment, and yet having no adequate power to reach it; and helpless, because she dare not solicit the help of man because of the sense of her low estate. The Lord says to her, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Now it is evident that this gift places the receiver of it in the highest condition—a condition so full and blessed that there can be no addition to it, nor need of any addition. The "gift" is the living water which Christ gives; the Spirit of God dwelling in the new creation; a fountain of living water, springing up into everlasting life. The Lord presents to us a specimen of His grace in His actings with this woman of Samaria. He has entered on His ministry, and here are the firstfruits of it; and in her, man's need and state are

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fully disclosed, while the goodness and riches of His power are made known and conferred. Man could not be raised to a higher personal condition than that which the gift of God confers; for it supplies with everything, and that for ever. But this cannot be seen or appreciated by man but as man's conscience is exposed before God, and his utter and irretrievable ruin made manifest to him; for then it is that the sense is before the soul that help only comes from God. When cast on God as a sinner, dependent on His mercy, he receives what God gives, and not merely what his need prescribes or demands, and as believing in Christ all blessing is secured to him.

The next link is that the soul thus blessed, the cup filled, flows over in worship to the Father. (Ver. 23.) Worship of the highest order, and that in the relationship of children to the Father, is now the relation of the new man to God. The Father seeketh such to worship Him. They that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in



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truth. The soul filled with the inexhaustible blessing from the fountain of living water, naturally occupies itself with, delights in, and adores the blessed God, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. What a contrast to the state of the Jew in chapter ii.!

There is another link at the end of this chapter which I may notice. When the Lord visited Cana, it was in connection with a wedding—man's brightest day. Now here (ver. 46) a nobleman, or courtier, begs His presence to stay the threatened death of his child; and when the Lord demurs, because of their unbelief, he replies, "Sir, come down, ere my child die." Jesus says to him, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." The nobleman goes in faith, depending on that word; and he finds afterwards that at the very time at which was uttered the word on which he rested, his son began to amend, though the One who uttered it, and the one who believed it, and the sick child, were many miles apart. Thus faith in the word of Christ,

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and life as a consequence, were working together at one and the same moment. I allude not now to the typical import of this incident; but I regard it morally as shewing us how faith and life spring up together. While faith is working in the father, life is working in the child, and the father is so assured in heart that it is God's work, that it is added, "himself believed and his whole house."

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## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

## THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

THE cross of Christ is owned and believed in by every Christian, but peace and practice depend on the extent of the soul's apprehension of it. It is such an all important doctrine, that there can be no profession of Christianity without the acknowledgment of it in some form, and possibly there is no truth which has been so continually and so strangely perverted, or one of which only a very partial and insufficient measure has been accepted.

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It is with the hope of awakening souls to its importance, by pointing out how they suffer from those perversions and limitations, that I here attempt to consider the subject, for if what the cross has effected were clearly seen, all the limitations, as well as perversions of it, would be exposed.

The cross has two aspects: one with regard to God, the other with reference to the believer. The former necessarily embraces the most, and from overlooking this aspect of it, has arisen serious misapprehension of the truth. When the blessed Lord came into the world, John, His witness, looking on Him, says, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." This was plainly with reference to the altered position in which all things here would be placed by the cross of Christ. Sin had entered on this scene, but the Lamb of God would take away the sin from this order of things, from the world. We can hardly estimate the extent of the work here devolving on the Lamb of God, or the effect of it. It

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comprises the removal by sacrifice of that which was contrary to God and offensive to Him. It is not that God annihilates everything here and works elsewhere; but that He, through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, can reinstate everything now under judgment, in an entirely new order and degree, and that in righteousness because of the sacrifice. The cross enables Him to continue His creation in a new order. If there had been no cross, there must be judgment on the creation as it stands; but now, peace having been made by the blood of His cross, God can by Him reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven. Surely we little apprehend the greatness of the work, or the effect of the cross, unless we see the extent of the judgment, and how everything was involved in it. If the soul grasps the extent and severity of the judgment, with what wonder and satisfaction must the eye rest on the cross, and see judgment so borne there—peace so made—that God can reconcile all things to Himself. If the fall of

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Adam has occasioned the universal judgment, if from that point one traces the widespread deluge of death and distance from God, with what rapture and praise can we behold the cross, and there see, not only the tide of judgment rolled back, but exhausted—all its demands met—and now God at liberty in righteousness to reconcile all things to Himself! Do souls really regard the cross in this singular and unparalleled scope? From the moment of Adam's sin until the cross, there was no rest for God on earth. He did not forsake His people, for His glory ever sought a place among them, but He had not a sabbath here; nor could He, until His Son, our Lord, could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." How little do we regard the cross in this light! Even as that one great moment when God according to His own mind is at liberty to deal with the world, so that He can reconcile all things to Himself. In the history of the universe, there is nothing so

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great and admirable as the cross. It stands forth pre-eminently as the dawn of an eternal day to this world. If at Adam's fall the sun went down at noon-day, at the cross Jesus went down into the depths of blackness and darkness—combated all their strength and despoiled them, and inaugurates for us the endless day of heavenly glory.

But more than this : the cross of Christ has enabled God to reconcile us, who hitherto were alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled. It is through the cross of Christ that God is enabled to reach the prodigal ; for there, the distance between God and the sinner was repaired ; the judgment resting on man was there borne by the Son of God. He took away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. God Himself rends the veil from the top to the bottom ; there is no longer any obstruction to His dealing with man, once under judgment ; because, the judgment being borne, grace can reign through righteousness. Who can esti-

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mate what the cross has effected for God? So great was the effect that our Lord declares (John xiii. 31), when Judas went out, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." God was glorified in the fulness and completeness of the answer now rendered in the cross to all His claims. Thus the sin of the world has, through the cross, redounded to the glory of God. The Son of man is glorified in the cross, and God is glorified in Him. He has done the will of God and finished His work. If the ruin be great, the reparation, or the manner in which it has been repaired, is unaccountably greater; the free gift is beyond all comparison greater than the condemnation.

Now let us see what the cross effects for the believer. When Adam sinned, he fell under the judgment of death. Dying, he must die! Nothing can relieve of this judgment but substitution. The judgment must be borne; the righteousness of God requires it. Man, who is under it, cannot be relieved of it but by another bearing it. It cannot

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be cancelled or overlooked. Righteousness demands judgment, and if man falls under it he cannot or could not rise out of it; and if God recovered him out of it, He would compromise the righteousness of His own sentence. Man cannot in righteousness be exonerated but by one, not chargeable with his guilt, bearing the judgment of it. This Christ did on the cross. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He bore the judgment in His own body on the tree. Our old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed. There was no way of rescuing us but by undergoing the judgment—and this is the cross. Christ would ever have abode alone if He had not died on the cross. The Son of man must be lifted up, otherwise eternal life could never have been given to us. There was only the one way by which we could be saved. Without the cross there could be no escape from judgment, no entrance into life. The blessed Son spent thirty-three years here, and after



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all, He says, in reference to Himself, "Unless a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." He had not up to this brought any one to His own ground before God. There is judgment on man, and there can be no righteousness until that is removed. The blessed Son of God goes down into the depths of judgment. The cross opens a way out of the dungeons of eternal torment, into the rest of the Father's house. The cross has not only secured the way of escape for man; but on it has been crucified the old man, that the body of sin might be destroyed. I do not see the cross truly if I only see it as opening a way of escape for me, and yet allowing that in me to escape which has incurred the judgment. This is one of the general limitations in the effect of the cross. The ending of the old man may not be denied, but it is not insisted on as important to the understanding of the cross. In Romans vii. it is the will of the flesh, the law of it working in the members, that one cries to be delivered from; and not, as is often supposed, the

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works and sins of the flesh. Both are removed in the cross. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." The cross opens the door of escape for me from the state in which I am; but it does not admit the continuance of that state. That state has been judged. What is judged cannot be continued. The moment that by faith I see my escape from judgment, because of the cross of Christ, that moment I am, because of that same cross, set on entirely new ground, even as *fruit* of Him who died, and I must leave my old man behind, crucified; so that I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. If I do not accept this, I have limited the cross, and in fact have assumed that I can be freed by Christ's work on the cross from the judgment which rests on the old man, and yet be allowed to retain that which caused the offence. In short, that I escape through substitution the penalty for my offence, but that the state in which the offence placed me may continue. In effect, that a man may be

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saved through the intervention of another from the penalty under which he lies—for forgery, for instance—and yet he may retain the position acquired by it! Righteousness requires that not only the full penalty be paid, but that there should be a discontinuance of the state of offence; in fact the offending state must cease. The cross effects all this, and the one who truly understands it, can say with the apostle, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world.” Here the question of sin is not alluded to, but everything which in any degree was unsuited to God. The cross had cleared all away, and in this the apostle gloried. Some speak of the cross now-a-days as if it were something to allow the offender to remain as he was; as if it were a continual sacrifice, continually answering for an offending state which is not set aside and thus there is no real peace. Again, others see that the cross has removed their sins before God, and rejoice in it; but they do not

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see the extent of the action of the cross, either with reference to God or to themselves ; and hence in practice, while they would place the cross in faith between themselves and their sins, and know that they must not return to them, and that they are freed for ever from them, yet they can sanction and enjoy many carnal things, and the world, just as if there were no cross at all. And, alas! some (possibly believers) wear the cross as an ornament to decorate that (the old man) for which the Son of God bore it. There is no more painful perversion than this. If Christ died for me, I am bound by every good and right feeling to lay aside that for which He died, and which needed His death. Without that death I could not be delivered from judgment; but how dreadful to retain the condition for which my Saviour was judged ! Nay, I must now hate my own life; and I may well do so, since through faith I have the life of the Son of God.

May we increasingly know that the cross of Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

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THE WATCHERS.

Not yet the dawn—the things around  
No human eye sees as they are;  
But still on earth are watchers found,  
Absorbed with Christ, the Morning Star.

There's nothing left to fix the gaze,  
But this one blessed orb of light;  
And oh, how purely beam its rays  
Athwart the dark and wintry night.

What though the darkness reign below?  
God and the Lamb, to us, are light;  
Thyself, O God of hope, we know,  
The day is Thine, and Thine the night.

A little while! and ere the day  
In all its splendour shall be shewn,  
Thy vigil-keepers, rapt away,  
Shall find Thy glory, Lord, their own.



FRAGMENTS.

Is it better to lie in the earth as the ore, than to be forged in the furnace, and beaten into a blade fit for the hands of the Master? Great part of the bitterness of sorrow is, that it is not given to us to see the aim and object of Him who is passing us through the furnace. It may be, if we walked, like Enoch, with God, that He might deign to shew us what He is aiming at;

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if that may not be, we must seek such a consciousness of His love that we may know and trust Him in the dark. It is often hard to nature to believe that the great God really loves such worms of earth as we are. We *know* it, it is true; but, alas! what (to nature) is knowledge against sensation, when they contradict each other!

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Truth will never be truth to thee, nor to thy soul, till it is translated into action! Truth appeals to thy conscience, to thy affections, to thy duty, with all the authority of the God of truth. At first it deals with thee about ruin and redemption; it next claims to be formative of thy motives, to be the guide of thine actions, the director of thy thoughts, the animator of thy hopes, the overseer of thy whole inner as well as of thy whole outer life. Truth exists not for thee, if thou refuse it thine obedience and thy heart.

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2 Kings vi.—Have you tried God in *little* things? If you have not, you do not know Him: He will meet the little needs even more magnificently than the great ones. He will care for the smallest and most delicate feelings, but He will shew it in His own way. Elisha had his way of restoring the borrowed axe, and God has His way too; and if the man of God could save in days of old, meeting alike the greatest need and the least; cannot He, whom

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the man of God typified, do the same now in a new and a higher way? If you have not tried Him you have not known Him ; and if you have not known Him you cannot trust Him in the hour of your fear. (Ver. 17.) But if you have, you will prove that "greater is he that is for us, than he that is against us."

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If I have but a single blessing as a Christian, I know the SON, and God is moulding me into the same image from glory to glory. We are passing through all the circumstances down here in the hand of a God who will make us perfectly like the Son of His love. If we saw this glory, we should leave ourselves, and be afraid to ask Him even to remove a trial or a difficulty.

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Would to God we knew a little of the weakness that characterizes us before God ! because we should then be driven to use a little more that grace with which Christ is waiting to supply our need. If you realize the weakness and take to you this promise to the Church of Smyrna, "I will give thee a crown of life," you have a good portion. Your weakness can live, as a parasitic plant, on the greatness of the First and the Last: He that *became* dead and is alive.

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The word of God is so mixed up with Christ and the power of His grace, that it cannot be read with a heart open to it, without the power of Christ stealing into the heart with it.

# PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

## PART IX.

### THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF WOMEN.

“I WILL pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.” (Joel ii. 28, 29.) Such was the language of Joel, which Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost to shew that what took place had been foretold: not that the prophecy was fulfilled. He does not say that. He introduces it as “This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.” For, whilst in several places the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on Israel is predicted (Isaiah xxxii. 15; xliv. 3; Ezek. xxxix. 29), in Joel only are the Gentiles included, and that in the term “all flesh.” And as the Church was to be composed of souls from Jews and Gentiles made one new man in Christ, the words of the prophecy of Joel alone



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explained what men that morning had witnessed.

Man, however highly favoured of God, proves himself unfit for His gifts. He receives them and misuses them. Of the misuse of temporal favours Israel is the example, who poured out on the altars of Baal what God had given them. Of the abuse of spiritual gifts the Church furnishes a proof. What patience and long-suffering mercy are manifested on the part of our God when dealing with a redeemed nation, or correcting and teaching the assembly of His saints, the Church! That sinners should abuse His gifts is not surprising; but that saints should misuse His greatest favours, shews up in a strong light what man really is. In the Romans we learn what the sinner is before God; in the Corinthians we see to what saints can descend. Coming behind in no gift, so richly endowed, they used what they had received for the display of themselves, and permitted, nay encouraged, disorders in the assembly of God.

Moral evil was allowed among them

unrebuked, and a litigious spirit was unchecked. Self rampant was manifested in eating of things offered to idols, and in their meetings for the Lord's supper. Spiritual gifts too were abused, and even the resurrection of the dead was denied by some. And besides these grievous disorders, women took a prominent part in the assembly, speaking in the Church, and were supported in this by some of the brethren. What is man, whether saint or sinner, when he acts according to his will! Questions once authoritatively settled are re-opened, to be discussed as still undecided, and to be settled according as each one, or each school of thought or denomination, may conclude is fitting. And scripture is unheeded, or at all events its plain decisions are set at nought, if they square not with the thoughts and wishes of the disputants.

The public ministry of women is an example of this. In evangelizing publicly the world, in teaching the Church, in leading the assembly in prayer, or in discharging the office of an elder, men

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were recognized in the early Church as qualified for and called to such service. Not that every man was qualified and called to such work; but it was everywhere owned to be the work of the men. Were women ever acknowledged and sanctioned if engaging in such service? Throughout the Acts and the Epistles there is not a hint of a woman being sent of God to preach to the world, or the Church laying hands on her to have fellowship in that her work. Gaius (3 John) shewed hospitality to those who went forth to preach, taking nothing of the Gentiles (or, as some would read, heathen), but these labourers are described as men. The language in which the elect lady is addressed (2 John) leads to the conclusion that men only were in contemplation; and Jude, who speaks of the apostasy, speaks clearly only of male teachers. (Ver. 4.)

As in Christ all, both men and women, shared in the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. As in the Church all were to be in subjection to the Head. Both men and women were endowed

with the spirit of prophecy. Agabus and others amongst men, the four daughters of Philip the evangelist amongst women, are illustrations of this sovereign favour of God. But the possession of a gift, and the right use of it, are different things. The manifestations of the Spirit were given to every man to profit withal; and to each the Holy Ghost divided severally as He would. It was sovereign favour at the outset to receive any manifestation of the Spirit; and, received by those in union with the risen Head, each was to be regulated in the assembly at least by the commands of the Lord.

It has been observed that women were employed as the first heralds to announce the Lord's resurrection. Granted. But they were never commissioned to preach to the world about it. We know that Mary was sent by the Lord to tell His disciples of His approaching ascension. We know that the women were commissioned by the angel to advise the eleven of the empty tomb. We know that they discharged their mission faith-

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fully. (Lnke xxiv. 23.) We know that the Lord appeared to them on their way to the city. (Matt. xxviii. 9.) Yet we receive not the authoritative announcement of that wonderful event on the word of women. It was gracious that, since Eve was the first who gave ear to the serpent, women should be the first to announce the Lord's victory over death; but in 1 Corinthians xv. all mention of their testimony is omitted, and the proof of His resurrection is made to rest on what Cephas, James, others, and, last of all, Paul saw. Is not this silence about the women expressive? Was it forgetfulness on the part of Paul, or design on the part of the Spirit of God?

Again, the language of Psalm lxviii. 11 has been relied on to authorize female evangelists for the world. "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those (*lit.*, the women) who published it." It will be sufficient here to remark that this psalm has reference to a future day and to a different dispensation, as it looks to the establishment of the king-

dom in power through victory gained by the Lord over His enemies, and though the apostle quotes part of it in Ephesians iv. 8, his application of the words quoted, whilst shewing how much is contained in them, brings out the contrast between our time and the future the Psalmist has in view.

If woman has no scripture authority for publicly evangelizing the world, what place has she as a teacher or speaker in the assembly of the saints? Women could prophesy, but not in the assembly when gathered together. 1 Corinthians xi. tells us what she did, and that she should have a covering on her head when doing it. 1 Corinthians xiv. tells us when she should not prophesy in any sense of the word. "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but to be under obedience, as also saith the law . . . . for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35.) It is not permitted unto them to speak, is one reason; it is a shame for them to speak in the Church,

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is another. How far these Corinthians had got astray ! They were allowing what was unlawful; they were suffering what was shameful. Some might have pleaded ignorance of what was unlawful. Could any have pleaded ignorance of what was shameful? Here, however, men have endeavoured (where have they not?) to evade the direct teaching of the Spirit by interpreting “in the church” what are called church meetings. To those subject to the word, such an interpretation can have no weight. The tenor of the chapter, and the use of the word “church” throughout it, forbid all thought of such a meaning. To explain away in such a manner the apostle’s injunctions is a perilous thing. On some matters mentioned in this epistle he gave his advice; on this he made known the commandments of the Lord. (Ver. 37.)

It is well to remark the place accorded to revelation, when the assembly met together. It took precedence of everything. If a prophet was speaking, and the Spirit revealed something to

another, the first was to hold his peace. A fresh revelation from God at any moment was in season, and opportunity was to be afforded for its promulgation. Yet women, even if prophets, were to be silent in the assembly. Philip's four daughters, whilst prophesying outside of the meeting, would have been disorderly if attempting to speak within it. And no plea of a divine revelation would have availed them to have averted the censure of the assembly, or of the apostle; the word clearly shewing that God the Holy Ghost would at such a time use only the men.

Besides assembling for worship and edification, believers met for prayer. What place had the woman in the general prayer meetings? That women might pray, 1 Corinthians xi. tells, but that women must be silent in the general prayer meetings, 1 Timothy ii. makes clear. For as 1 Corinthians xiv. gives us the assembly met for edification, 1 Timothy ii. gives us saints met for prayer. For whom they might pray outside the range of the Church,



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and their perfect freedom in prayer having been first maintained, we have next stated who should lead in prayer, and who are to be silent. “I will therefore that the men pray everywhere . . . . Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” In such terms does he regulate such meetings. And we learn that he would have regarded a female leading in prayer before men as usurping or exercising authority over the man. How differently he viewed this from what some do in these days! But he goes further and assigns reasons for what he has said, carrying us backward in thought to the creation, and then leading us onward to the fall. “For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” The very order of creation forbids her acting in such a way, and also what took place at the fall. We should learn from the fall her unfitness for such a place; we should

see from the history of creation that it never was her place.

As in public ministry, so in the ruling of a local assembly, or the ordering of things in the Church, we gather women had no place. Of local charges there were two kinds—eldership and deaconship. Both elders and deacons were to be married men, husbands of one wife. The qualifications of an elder are stated in 1 Timothy iii., and the character of such as should be appointed to the office in Titus i. In neither passage have we any mention of their wives; yet, when the qualifications of a deacon are enumerated in 1 Timothy iii., the fitting demeanour of their wives is described. Why this difference, this silence in the one case, and the mention of them in the other? Was it not because in ruling the Church the elders' wives could not take part, but in the duties of a deacon, caring for the temporal wants of the saints, she could help her husband, and find herself quite at home in that work.

Again, we gather that many of the apostles were married men (1 Cor. ix.),

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but we have no hint in either the Acts or Epistles of anything their wives did. They were surely a comfort and help to their husbands as they laboured; but both apostles and elders were discharging duties in which they could not share.

As Paul suffered not a woman to teach, so none of the other apostles hint at any divergence from this order being allowed. At Corinth he corrected this evil, and we hear no more of it till we read the epistle to the angel of the church in Thyatira: none surely will make that example a precedent for such a thing now. At Corinth, and at Thyatira, such a custom was reprov'd and disallowed. Shall the commandments of the Head of the Church be set at nought? Shall the injunctions of the apostle writing under the guidance of the Holy Ghost be unheeded? Private service in helping only, the word does not forbid. Priscilla with her husband helped Apollos. Amongst her own sex also, woman has a sphere. Only before men, and in the assembly, her place is to be kept, and God's order to be conformed to.

## PROGRESS, AND WHAT IS IT?

DID Jesus come to acknowledge and crown the progress of men? or did He come to rescue them from a place of distance and departure from God?

There was a distinctive peculiarity which attached to the ministry of our Lord, which those who heard Him did not fail to recognize, and to contrast with the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. The synagogue of Capernaum was a remarkable witness of this, for, as He preached to the people on the sabbath-day, "they were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." It is this combination of doctrine and authority which was so remarkable in the ministry of the Messiah. Take as an example the man possessed: "When the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what *new* doctrine is this? for with *authority* commandeth

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he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." The formalism of that day was sustained by a traditional appointment, which those accepted who were its most prominent supporters; but which Jesus exposed and sternly rebuked: "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." It is of great moment that the distinction between ministry in power by the Spirit to the conscience, and a ministry which is sustained by human ordination, and which in its turn sanctions and accredits worldliness, and a religion of forms, should be as distinctly marked by Christians of the present day.

There was another reason why the people should note this combination of divine authority with the doctrines taught by Him who came from God, inasmuch as these had been so long separated one from the other; for in the apostasy of Israel (as in Christendom now) *how* could God clothe the traditions of men, or the formalism of the people (even though sustained by "appointed feasts, and the

calling of assemblies") with His authority? Properly speaking, any testimony from God must be accredited *originally* by His name, and maintained by His power. One need only refer in proof of this to Moses and his rod in Egypt and the wilderness, or the Messiah on earth anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, or the Lord in heaven and the pentecostal Spirit.

Strictly, the ministry of the Prophets was of a different character, though sustained by a "thus saith the Lord;" for in its objects it was reclamatory and not formative; and this recognized the declension of the people from the original ground on which Jehovah had planted them. Their ministry *was* sanctioned by outward and miraculous power—yet not that which should have abidingly sustained the testimony to the consciences of others on behalf of God; but which recalled the faith of the people, by its exercise, to Him they had left, as in the case of Elijah and Elisha, however different the range and objects of its exercise in these two may have been.

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When otherwise, testimony was by an *inward* power, which fashioned the prophet *morally*, and had therefore more to do with the corresponding thoughts and feelings suited to a people in a state of declension: Jeremiah and Ezekiel are examples of this. Of the first of these it is written, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” His book of Lamentations proves how deeply he entered into the state and condition of the people who had not a tear to shed for themselves, or for the dishonour which their departure from Jehovah had brought upon them. “How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger.” The manner in which Ezekiel was *morally* suited to the objects of his prophecy is, in some respects, more striking, because *more* humiliating to himself personally in the presence of

a people who would not humble themselves before the God against whom they had revolted. The ministry of John the Baptist partook more of the Jeremiah and Ezekiel character than of any outward and miraculous power of display: "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey." Moreover, those who observed the Baptist said of him, "John did *no miracle*, but all things which John spake of this man were true."

In the ministry of the Lord these two characters of power, which may perhaps be called personal and relative (and which we have seen necessarily separated in our apostasy), were united; for, though a prophet, and amongst other things prophesying of Jerusalem's sad progress, and the great tribulation to come upon her people, yet also He was the Apostle of a new profession and the bringer in of "the secret things of God." He turned unto His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."



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It is of the greatest moment for us to witness, in the living ministry of the Lord, the combination of the authority of God, which clothed His every word and deed with the power by which He was suited in the perfectness of His own nature to go deeper than ever did Jeremiah or Ezekiel into the sorrows of Israel and their causes. These He entered into and took up, not with a "Thus saith the Lord," but according to God, and in the full knowledge of, and communion with, God's holiness, as well as in the deepest compassion for the people in their sins.

What must have been the character of the nation's progress that was thus broken in upon by a testimony to their *own* state, and which closed for awhile (if not entirely) their brilliant history under Solomon, save as here and there the recovering grace of God upon their repentance connected them for awhile with their original pre-eminence in blessing under their revival kings, Hezekiah and Josiah? What was their progress but a departure from Jehovah?

He sending one servant and another for the fruits of His vineyard, and last of all His own Son, whom they slew, and then seized upon the inheritance.

Miracles and miraculous power always marked the Lord's pathway among the oppressed and the destitute; for how could such a one be a sojourner upon this earth and not stretch out His hand to heal? But does any one think that reaching the consequences and delivering men from their pressure in this world would meet the mind and satisfy the heart of Him who knew their causes? If all around Him had forgotten God, and the righteousness which sustained Him, could Jesus stop short of this source, the springhead of divine majesty and essential holiness, which had been outraged; or fail to take up and vindicate them in the compass and range of that work which He had undertaken? Man was a creature, needing not only to be relieved by the way, but to be set right with God; and that not merely by being rescued from the judgment of sin and the outbreakings of a fallen nature,

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but morally in the thoughts and affections of a new nature, to be reconciled to God in the known and understood agreement of every spring of thought and feeling within him.

Pursuing the subject of progress and what it is, we may examine the historical record of God's ways with His own people, when the rest of the world was plunged into idolatry and given over to it. Why does Jeremiah say, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for *the slain* of the daughter of my people?" Why the sympathies and sufferings of Him who was emphatically "the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?" His nights of prayer? His life of unwearied compassion and service for man? and finally *the death* by which He glorified God? Does not all this prove the worthlessness and estrangement of "the world which loved its own," and made a course for itself? Again, why did the solitary path of the Lord's own perfectness on earth give Him, by righteous title in

resurrection, the pre-eminence in the heavens to which He ascended? If all on earth were in progress, why did He leave it, by saying of Himself and His disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world?" and why did the world confirm it by adding, "Away with him, it is not fit that he should live?"

Again, viewed in another aspect, had mankind made such universal progress as to require from God a new system of doctrine for their moral elevation, and a revelation by His Son to bring them up into the reserves of His wisdom, "His hidden things," as *due* to a race which had used up and glorified God by what was previously introduced by Moses? as some affirm? Had human attainment in righteousness and self-renunciation made out a claim on God for something further, by which the mind and heart of man might be developed in a yet more thorough correspondence with Himself? True it is that Judaism was superseded by Christianity, but for no such reasons as these, "for by the deeds of the law shall *no* flesh living be justified."

The first lesson in Christianity is,

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“Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again.” A *Saviour* was sent into this world, because man had so ruined himself as to require one. Salvation is preached to the *lost* through the sacrifice of Christ, for “there is none righteous, no, not one.” “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” What can be plainer than that the nation of Israel was the former proof of departure from God, and that Christendom in its boasted progress is the present one?

The Acts supply us with an additional proof, that in the first establishment of a new order of things by God, He sustains those employed in it by external and miraculous power, whilst, in times of declension and apostasy this outward display of concurrence being necessarily broken, He suits the vessel *morally*, by “a power that worketh in us,” to be a fit expression to a people of what becomes of those who have so failed in their relationships towards Him.

(*To be continued, D. V.*)

## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

### THE ABSENCE OF CHRIST.

THE Lord, knowing that nothing would so peculiarly affect His own on the earth, as the fact of His going away, records for us fully in John xiii. to xvii. how He will provide for us during His absence from this scene, and our journey through it. He knew every feeling and need which could be awakened by the blank; and reckoning on our faithfulness and affection He provides accordingly; and consequently, as there is faithfulness and affection for Him, as one known, so is there an understanding of the gracious and marvellous provision for His absence in these chapters. But, as there is indifference and denial of His absence, so are they unappropriated and inapplicable. I do not propose to comment on these chapters, but simply to draw attention to the fact of Christ's absence, and some of the consequences of it. Nothing betrays more the meagre nature of our love to Christ than the little practical sense we have of His absence.

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The true evidence of how we have valued any one, is the extent of blank we are conscious of in the absence of such an one. If we can go on as usual, it is very clear the presence was not necessary to us; but according to our value of the presence is the greatness of the blank caused by absence. Now nothing can fill or repair the blank but that which has caused it. In simple language, the blank which is caused by the absence of any one can only be repaired by the presence of that same one. And hence, if I feel the Lord's absence and the blank here occasioned by it, nothing can repair that blank to me but His presence. And consequently, as His absence is felt, so is His presence sought. The latter proves the genuineness of the former. The disciples had known Him as present with Him, and they at once felt the blank and loss which His absence entailed. And to them, every word that He said which indicated how the blank would be repaired was of all importance. Saints now have never known Him down here

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personally, as the first disciples did, but they, according as they know Him, have at every turn the painful sense that He is not here, and as this sense is deepened and sustained, so is there in them a retreating from things as they are here, because His absence is so felt. It is as we know the blessedness and the power of His presence now, that we feel the blank and desolation caused by His absence. His absence is a fact, and He repairs the blank, assuring us that He will not leave us comfortless, but that He will come to us. Now this coming *to* us does not mean the same thing as His coming *for* us. The coming *for* us, is when He comes to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. His coming *to* us is by the Holy Ghost to repair the blank of His absence. If I feel the absence of Christ from this scene, and if my heart be truly set on Him, nothing can make up, or repair for me, this grievous blank, but His coming *to* me—His manifesting Himself to me; and this must be by the Holy Ghost.



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Hence, if I feel the absence of Christ, my only resource is the Holy Ghost, who is on the earth, sent down to manifest to me the absent Christ. What relief to a true and faithful heart! How simple it is that nothing can repair absence but presence; and if we do not feel the absence of Christ, it is but too evident that we have never yet known Him as present with us. Where is there a heart for Christ, in a day like this, which does not feel that it is vain to hope to find Him even in things avowedly dedicated to Him. The fact is, souls are satisfied with relief of *conscience*, and there stop, instead of going on to the satisfying of the *heart*. Nothing but His presence, as we see in the case of Mary Magdalene (John xx.), will satisfy the heart; no amount of gifts or communications will do for the heart. Nay, all these only intensify the desire of the true heart to have His presence. If gifts or communications would make up for the presence, then they are greater than the presence. This cannot be; nay, their value consists in being expressions

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of that presence, which is the more desired as it is by these expressions kept fresh before the heart and mind. The moment my heart delights in the presence of Christ, it is unsatisfied elsewhere; and then His coming to me by the Holy Ghost is my relief and comfort here. And here it is that I first begin to find my true place for Him on the earth. If I do not feel His absence, I do not value the reparation of it. Christ's absence is not felt; the Holy Ghost's presence is proportionally not regarded; and this is the real state of christendom. My true place for Him here begins with loving Him; for it is as I find Him satisfying my heart that I am led and empowered to occupy the place here which pleases Him—one in fellowship of the Spirit.

But as I am satisfied with Him, I am in heart dissociated from everything not of Him. Nothing ministers to my heart where He is not; and where this is so, I begin to realize that He is not only absent from the place in which I walk, but that He has been rejected from it;

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refused a place in it; so that I am not only isolated here because of the blank of His absence, but I am also repelled from association with things here because He has been refused His rightful place. His absence affects *me* in the place; but His rejection makes the place fearful, and separates me from every work and way of man, because of the guilt of His rejection and consequent judgment of this world. If it were merely a question of His absence, things would remain unaltered to me, only with this feeling—that none of them could fill up the blank. Nay, the more lovely and attractive they were naturally, the more would they evoke desolation of heart, because inviting my admiration where the one object of my heart no longer was. The order of nature and scenery indeed remains unaltered, but the fact that none of these things ever could revive His presence—nay, that as His presence is enjoyed by the Spirit, they are all in abeyance—closes the eye to them. The creation remains in all its native beauty,

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but it never can repair the blank of Christ's absence, and the spiritual one *knows* it to be so; and that it is, with the eye closed to everything here, and the heart absorbed in Him, that one enters, through the Spirit, into the joy of His presence. The works of nature cannot repair the blank of His absence; but the Holy Ghost alone can and does. My prospect is Christ's coming *for* me; in the interval I know His coming *to* me by the Holy Ghost.

I need not add more, but nothing is clearer than that, if the absence of Christ be not fully apprehended, there is really no power to walk here for Christ, because there is no acknowledgment of the Spirit, who can only fill the blank and lead us here according to His mind. Consequently there must be unhallowed mixture and divers false efforts to make up for the absence of Him who is the sole fountain and supply of all our blessings.

Oh for a true heart for Him ! Nothing but His presence by the Spirit could then satisfy our hearts here, and every other thing would only have its relative value.

## THE REWARD OF WATCHING.

THE true servant character during the rejection of Christ is to have the loins girded, lights burning, and to be found watching. There is the expectation of His return and service. While we are here in this world we must have our loins girded: it is our place to serve. This is not the place for rest, but for watchfulness—watchfulness over our every thought. *Heaven is where I can let my heart go!* That is an immense comfort; but *here* I must have my loins girded. My condition here is that my heart and every affection must be kept in order by the word of God. I am here waiting for Christ, who has set Himself apart as the heavenly man, in the glory, that He may be the one object before our hearts. I am waiting for one who loves me, and who is coming Himself for me. He does not *send* for me; He comes Himself; and we are to have our hearts in order to receive Him. A man who has his hand on the handle of the door is ready the minute

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the knock comes to open it; and this is what we should be. This is not prophecy. Prophecy concerns events on the earth. The Lord's coming takes me to heaven, and this is the hope of the Christian for himself, and until the Lord comes, his place is to watch. "Blessed are those servants whom the lord shall find watching; I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them." He says, "You have had your heart on the stretch, and you were right to have it on the stretch; but I bring you to a place where you are to sit down, and it is my delight to minister to you." I not only get the blessing, but I get the One who ministers it Himself. What a picture of the love of Christ! Love delights to serve, and here this blessed One says, "I will gird myself that I may serve you." Christ took the form of a servant when He became man. Is He going to give up being man? *Never.* He becomes a servant on ascending to heaven, to wash our feet. He has the

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first place in everything, and the first place in service too. He is not going to give it up ; He is the servant for ever. And we who serve and watch for Him here, during this little while of His rejection, will then find our reward in rest, and in the feast at which Jesus will gird Himself to serve us.

The world is that in which the flesh finds its sphere and centre. God has set Christ before us, and He is the *great central point* that attracts us up *there*, and everything *here* is against Him, for the world is where He was cast out.

If the Lord were to come this night, could we each say, "This is my Lord, I am waiting for Him?" Have you so known the virtue of Christ in redemption that you have nothing to fear at His coming? or are you allowing the spirit of the world to come in and hide your affection and devotion to Him? If He were to come, would the joy of your heart be to open to Him immediately? I have joy *from* Him till He comes ; I have joy *with* Him when He comes.

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## DISCIPLESHIP.

### PART II.

THE first step in discipleship is entered on when the soul has reached the sense that Christ is enough for it, above and apart from everything, so that one can leave all and follow Him. But after this, there is an entirely new path opened out to me. If I say, I abide in Him, I must walk even as He walked. I have to walk by faith and not by sight. There is a race set before me, and it is not only that Christ is enough for me before God, but I must make Him my object here on earth, where all is against Him; laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset me; looking out unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. The walk of faith, as with Abram at first, necessarily obliges me to separate from all that which, in the first step of discipleship, I have found unsuited for the presence of Christ, in whom I have now my rest. And hence the trial is to preserve practically, in every varied circumstance and



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state, that separation which the soul enters on when Christ is enough for it.

When the ways of man on the restored earth, after the flood, betrayed his complete and thorough departure from God, Abram is called out to walk here in dependence on God, waiting on Him for place and possession. A man of God on the earth, where everything was contrary to God, could take no other place. A high and distinguished place it was to be set in, here for God on earth; and the exaction,—the terms of the call necessarily were, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” Excision and separation from all that which suits and ministers to man naturally, becomes the walk of faith. If all that which suits me naturally is opposed to God, the moment I take my place as dependent on God, nothing can be simpler, than that the action incumbent on me, is to break distinctly and definitely with it. I have to do with God in a scene where He has been disowned and forgotten, hence the call

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must embrace my country, my kindred, and my father's house. It is literally the race set before me; and as I run, I lay aside every weight, and sin;—which is my evil self. The awakening of the heart to obey the call, is faith. But then faith is tried; and it does not reach its satisfaction, or its proper work, until what hinders it is overcome. Abram does not get into Canaan until his father is dead. What is entered on, in the first step of discipleship, must be maintained in walk here. Peter, after he had left all, and followed Christ in joy of heart, had to learn the power of faith, which would only enable him to walk superior to himself. Abram's father figuratively sets forth the nature which links us to all here, that from which we have had our origin, from which we spring. Now, until we are by faith able to break with nature in obedience to God, we are not practically in the *walk* of a disciple which is the next step in discipleship. Peter did not *feel* the necessity of breaking this link, until he was painfully taught the weakness and

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evil of the flesh, when He denied the Lord. His confidence in his own nature hindered him as a disciple; he had not broken with it; his father (figuratively speaking) was not dead. That which links us to nature as men, is comprised in the call of Abram; and it will be found that there is a check always to the walk of faith, or in other words, to running the race, when the heart is occupied or turned aside by either country, kindred, or father's house.

A very little self-examination will shew us how we lose our true place here for God in a world which has rejected His Son, when we drop into thought about either one or other of the three. Nothing more insidiously diverts us from the leading of God's Spirit than thinking or talking of ourselves and our natural associations; and nothing so effectually deadens and darkens the soul. We enter the path of faith when we practically maintain what we learned in the first step of discipleship. It is ever easier to attain to a height than to maintain it. To

attain is the first thing; to maintain what we have reached is the next. Now in the path of faith we are called to maintain the sufficiency of Christ, above everything of nature. It is the maintaining of that which we have already learned; and hence we are tested by everything of nature. Abram did not enter on the path of faith fully till he broke with nature (in the death of his father); but after he had entered on it, and knew assuredly that he was in it, the altar and the tent witnessing to it, and the appearing of the Lord confirming it, he encounters trials he had little reckoned on. There is a famine in the land: his faith gives way, and he goes down into Egypt. In the first stage of the walk of faith, I am taught the weakness of my own nature, and what I must be proof against; but when I am really in the power of faith, as Abram was on his return from Egypt, I seek no present portion. I am now able to escape the snare into which Lot fell; still a root of Egypt remains, and Ishmael springs up. But here again I

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must rise above nature—I must cast out the bondwoman and her son. These are proofs of the truthfulness of my dependence on God; and they mark the walk of the disciple here. Lastly, Abraham reaches the end of himself (that which springs from him) when he offers up Isaac. With the surrender of Isaac every hope to nature was at an end, and discipleship in walk of faith is reached when, like him, one can rise above all the ties and prospects of nature, and rest in God who raiseth the dead. Thus, in practice, one arrives at the point from which one had started, and the course here;—the orbit, is completed. Christ's power is made known to the soul in its varied qualities; I, not only possessing life in the Spirit, but the Spirit having filled my soul with the sense of His sufficiency, I prove the truth of it by the Spirit in my *walk* here; and “this one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” I understand the exhortation, “Be ye followers of me,

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and mark those who walk as ye have us for an ensample." Self being left behind, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ engrosses and satisfies my heart. I not only have tasted of His sufficiency, but, having combated all my nature, I have, in victory over it, reached that boasting in Christ, in the strength of which I count all but dung that I may have Him for my gain. When nature is thus superseded by Christ—that is, when every privation and blank from which it suffers is filled up by Christ, and He is known in the relief which His sympathy can only afford, even as He was known to Mary at the grave of Lazarus — nothing then remains for such an one but to anoint Him, as she did, for His burial. This anointing of the body of Jesus for His burial is expressedly communion with Him as He was here; and no one can reach this point until he has first learnt in its course here, how entirely Christ satisfies him in the varied trials he has to pass through, and it is this that the walk of the disciple reaches unto.

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To sum up. The first step of discipleship is known when I have so learnt in my soul the sufficiency of Christ that I can leave all behind—forsake all for Him. The next is, when in my walk here, in contact with the varied things which act on my nature, I am able to deny myself, and rise superior to them, in knowledge of the gain that I have in Him; so much that I count all things but dung, that it may be so; and press on to the mark where there will be full enjoyment of Him. The third is, when the things of Christ are my interest, simply because I have found all my own interests satisfied and secured in Him; but I cannot enter on this step of discipleship unless I have first been relieved by Him of every one of my own.

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## PROGRESS, AND WHAT IS IT?

*(Concluded from page 342.)*

THERE are three distinct classes of mankind recognized in the New Testament scriptures; viz., the Jews, the Gentiles,

and the Church of God. And as God is seen in connection with these, in the ways of His government and grace—their respective histories in these relations to Him, whether broken or unbroken, will determine the question of progress, according to what He owns, or disowns.

Many Christians will acknowledge Israel's failure, as a witness for God in the earth; and that, dispensationally, it is put aside (as declared in Romans xi.) to make room for the Gentiles, who are now grafted into "the olive tree" on their own responsibility; "If thou continue *not* in His goodness, thou also shalt be broken off." The Church of the living God was also its place of testimony, as the Body and Bride of Christ.

The introduction of Christianity, and the new testimony which gathered to this ground, was in the power of the Holy Ghost, outside man altogether, as the Pentecostal assembly witnesses! "When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled



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together and they were all *filled* with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." Again as to *testimony*: "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." Even when the new sin, of "lying to the Holy Ghost" was committed, the man and the woman (not like Adam and Eve "clothed with skins," and driven out of Eden, but) carried out dead—shew how God, whether in Paradise, or in the Church of Christ, maintains His own presence, and what befits it, in terrible righteousness—though afterwards in declension, "the longs offering of God may wait, as in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." But how could He be long suffering to Adam and Eve, or Ananias and Sapphira? They had respectively, though in different forms, brought *sin* into the dwelling place of God! Neither was a declension, nor an apostasy, but an original fall; "they kept not their first estate," but dropped into another, by transgression. Paul

himself, when writing to the Romans, glories in this primary power by which he wrought: "*I have* therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God; for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." Indeed, as we have said, the Acts contains among other things the historical account of the *formative* power of the Holy Ghost, in the establishment of Christianity, in connection with the Church of God; whilst, at the same time, this power gradually, but effectively, broke the links, and set free many of the disciples who were still entangled in Judaism; till, finally, the whole system was outwardly and entirely superseded.

The cross marks the last character and rate of human progress, as between God and mankind. It was this fearful outburst of human will against Him and His anointed, that made room for

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the love of God towards a world, which had not only rebelled against commandments, under Moses; but stood in revolt, with the proof of its guilt, upon the soldier's spear! Christianity, because of grace and the long suffering of God, affords an additional opportunity (if man is bad enough) for the grossest of all corruptions; inasmuch, as the elements which demonstrate what goodness is, may be used as *new* material against the truth, under the power of Satan. This, alas! is what the New Testament apostles and prophets, by the Holy Ghost, foresee and testify to, when speaking of "the last days" of this present dispensation. "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Finally, progress in the history of man can only be progress in what he is, in his own fallen nature. Left to himself, it is the deluge; aided by the law,

it is moral condemnation, and ejection from Canaan; endowed, and responsible for all that God could bestow in grace, it ends with the declaration, that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance, against them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What is the doctrine of Christ and the authority in which He ever spoke, but a setting aside of man in the flesh, and the testimony that all *true* advancement must be by acknowledging Christ at the right hand of God, in the place of honour and glory: and that to be one with Him *there*, must be by salvation through the work He did on the cross, when "He suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

Progress, according to God, is Christ; and the Christian is the one "who is able to give an answer to everyone that asks for a reason of the hope that is in him," by pointing to the Son of man, ascended and glorified. Our answer to every challenge is this — that "God,

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who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us." If a risen and glorified Christ, and oneness with Him, be the only true progress according to God, how can those talk of progress who rejected, and cast Him out, and killed Him? After this, what must progress be progression in?

True happiness, both now and hereafter, is in having this Christ as ours: true attainment, is in conformity to His image; true advancement, in being like Him and, finally, with Him. In short, the measure of the difference in question, is nothing less than what Christ is: "What think ye of Christ?" is still the test, which will make manifest to individual souls whether they are in part or entirely delivered from self and the traditions of men. Let any who doubt this make the trial, by a fuller and more

complete acknowledgment of Christ Jesus the Lord, as the one grand necessity, and the only one, between the soul and God; or between the world and Satan; or between faith and the coming glory, and see if men will be more content to be set aside upon all these points *now* than they were in other days.

The Lord give grace and courage for this confession, and may His people give heed to the exhortation, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to *the power* of God."

Do any wish to pursue the character and history of human progress to its climax, and the coming judgment, in yet plainer language? let them ponder Revelation xvi. 13: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of

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the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." A dispensation which closes in judgment, cannot surely be in its principles according to God; and if not, what must be the development of the present hour but some new forms of departure and alienation from God and from Christ, from the truth and from grace, from the cross and from the coming glory?

Faith in Christ, as we have seen, is divine progress, for He as Son of man is with God and where God is. "That I may know him" is real christian attainment; moreover, "as Christ is, so are we in this world," is our present standing before God. Personally, such are sealed by the Holy Ghost, which dwells in them, as the witness of the efficacious work of Christ in death and resurrection, at His first coming, and the earnest of the glory for which we look.

The second coming of the Lord, to receive the Church to Himself, will be the moment of her introduction to the

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blessing, for which she waits; moreover, "creation, which now groans under the bondage of corruption, will be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Israel will also realize, under the reign of the Messiah, Son of God, her bright prophetic hopes, in millennial glory; and the "Gentiles will rejoice with his people."

This is God's order: Christ is the centre of His thoughts and counsels for present grace, and for the universal blessing of every creature. May He be entirely and exclusively ours! for real progress can only be beyond the grasp of death, and outside the reach of judgment; and this is where Christ is and the Church.

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## THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

IS IT PERFECTION, OR "THE BEST THING GOING?"

THE great evidence of the impotence and defectiveness of our nature, is the inability to reach perfection in anything, and the attempt to gratify the



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desire for it, only leads to the discovery of our inability, so that the desire, commendable in itself, when fostered, grows into the worst of vices, either avarice or insatiable ambition. Nothing exposes more the imperfection of our nature than the simple fact that the more nature is ministered to, and the more that which is suited to it is superadded, the greater and deeper is its sense of the vanity of everything, as Solomon expresses it, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." This is the result of every fresh acquisition. There is, therefore, no reaching perfection in nature, and this fact gives colour to a very grievous mistake, into which saints in every age have fallen, namely, to be satisfied with imperfection in the things of God; not that they are regarded imperfect in *themselves*, but the idea is, that as we have not, we are not to reach the summit or perfection of any truth, though it be revealed, and though it be our calling.

The first and simple thing to admit is, that every line of truth has its summit or perfection, and then any point

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below this must be imperfection. No one acquainted with scripture can doubt this. Canaan was evidently the summit of the exodus from Egypt. The fattened calf in the father's house is without doubt the summit or perfection of the reception accorded to the prodigal; paradise to the thief; glory to Stephen; the heavenly place in Christ Jesus to the saint now. The second thing is to aim at this, the summit of each line of truth, and to refuse to be satisfied with any point *below* it. If I admit that every line of truth has its proper summit, and if my aim is to reach that summit, then though I may be far away from it practically, yet I am upheld in my endeavours to reach it by the Spirit of God, who always works *from* the summit, because He is there; and I am thus preserved from adopting the qualifications and limitations of the truth, which my fellows have accepted. The purpose to be satisfied with nothing imperfect, and the attempt to be content with "the best thing going," are two very different things, and have a very dif-

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ferent effect. In the former, I honour God who has called me to perfection; and though I have not reached the perfection practically, I will accept nothing that qualifies it, and I look to Him to lead me on, knowing that I am already apprehended in Christ Jesus. With the latter I refuse the leading of God's Spirit, and I hinder it by accepting that which limits the truth of God to a point below His mind. The constant excuse for defects individually or ecclesiastically is, "We cannot expect perfection here;" but this is an argument for putting up with imperfection, without any attempt to emerge from it. I admit there is imperfection, but the Spirit of God does not remain inactive, or content in imperfection. No doubt, He deals with us in the midst of imperfection; but where would He lead us? Surely to perfection, to the summit of every truth. The proof of apostasy in every age was the quiet way the people of God condescended to a limitation of His truth, and resigned themselves to it, as if it were a virtue; and afterwards,

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when there was a recovery of some of that which had been neglected—in other words, a reformation—it was regarded as an era *par excellence*. I am not disapproving of the revival, I commend and rejoice in it; but if souls are by it deluded from seeking perfection, then I must say it is a dangerous snare to them. If it be right to recover truth at all, surely it is more so to recover it perfectly. The argument for recovering it in part, applies still more to the recovery of it wholly. I do not deny that there is imperfection everywhere; but the extent of imperfection ought never to reconcile me to it. If I am on God's side, I refuse everything that is imperfect, though I be surrounded on all sides with imperfection; I do not resign myself to it, but through grace I turn aside from it, as it is manifested to me. It is not the question with me whether I shall ever reach perfection here; but I seek this and nothing less, and my purpose, God helping me, is neither to sanction nor connive at any imperfection in doctrine or practice, but

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to expose and disallow it in word and deed; and the more faithful I am, the more will it be disclosed to me, and the more shall I be enabled to reach the mind of God. The history given in Psalm cvi. is in principle the history of Christendom. There Israel is reminded that no single line of blessing did God ever propose or mark out for them, that they did not limit or qualify. "They forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel; they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word."

In dealing with the things of God, we have too much forgotten that they are God's and not ours. Man cannot obtain perfection in anything, and we must be content with imperfection as to human things. But God does obtain it in everything; and hence, one of the worst moral symptoms in the present hour is the attempt of saints to go on with things which in the secret of their hearts they disapprove of and condemn; and all simply with this excuse, that they see nothing better; as if seeing nothing better were any reason for remain-

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ing connected or involved with that which is not truth, though it be a part of it. Really one has not the truth until one has in faith reached the summit of it. The summit of it is its crown; and until the soul has been led by God's Spirit to see the point to which it reaches, one cannot speak of knowing it. The mistake which many true men have made, is in confining truth to the extent of the practical knowledge of it. To see by faith the summit of a truth, and to rest satisfied with this light or vision, without seeking to reach it practically, would be saying, "I have plenty of corn and cattle, but I am starving." Surely the abundance of food is nothing unless used; but it is quite another thing to place me spiritually (I am there naturally) in the state of ravens who have neither barn nor storehouse, or like an emigrant in a wild country, acquiring provision according to his own labour. The Spirit gives me faith to see the abundance God secured for me, but then I must rise and partake of it; and as I appropriate it, I understand and walk in the blessedness of it.

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What is the cause of the darkness in souls on any point of truth? It is not that they know nothing of it, but that they have not as yet laid hold by faith of its summit—its proper finish. Saints as a rule know something of every truth, but rarely, if ever, do they reach the summit of any. Truth in grace reaches down to man, but comes from God, and hence Christ Himself is the truth. I can touch the line of it, and even enter on it, without feeling the extent of its exaction on me; but as I proceed and see how it connects me with God, I am sensible that man in nature must retire, and this is the real check to the acceptance of truth's summit. Let us take any truth generally accepted among saints in the present day, and thereby test the correctness of these statements. Take the parable about the father and the prodigal in Luke xv. Will any one say that the feeding on the fatted calf in the father's house is aimed at by every one who knows that he is an accepted son, or that he is looking for it now as the proper and only completion of the truth he has tasted? If saints

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were feeding on those unequalled joys, little would the world and its things be thought of. Does every believer in Christ aim at possessing that "water that I shall give him," of which it is said, "he that 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 unto eternal life?" The commencement of this line must be touched by every believer, but how many see the summit or completion of it? Does every one who believes that the child of God is born of the Spirit, see and maintain that such an one is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and that the Church is the habitation of God through the Spirit? Does every believer in the death of Christ accept and insist on the crucifixion of the old man, and that if Christ be in us, the body is dead because of sin; that hence we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit? Does every one assured of being quickened with Christ know, or expect to know, that he is now seated with Him in heavenly places? Does every one who believes



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in the power and blessing of God's Spirit assent—yield himself to the truth, that the flesh profiteth nothing, and that no man understandeth the things of the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of God that is in him? All these truths are for the most part accepted and received by believers; but where, I ask, is any one of them enjoyed or taught among us, speaking generally? Where is it insisted on that the life of Christ is our life? Forgiveness is preached through the sacrifice of Christ, and perfect assurance of pardon before God; but where is it pressed as the summit of this truth, that it is His life which we now, as forgiven ones, possess, and should walk in here; “the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me?” (Gal. ii. 20.) Where is it believed and enforced that man was ended judicially before God on the cross; and hence, every one believing in Christ must hate his own life, that for which his Saviour was judged? Is it not plain that if either of these truths were grasped to their summit—their

## HIS PLACE OURS.

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perfection, from whence the Spirit of God propounds them—there would be a marked deliverance from the restlessness of spirit and worldliness of habit, which degrades the Christian to the level of the man of the world? The fact is, sad, bitterly sad as it is to feel it, that the most in many cases, that can be said of earnest men in this day, is that which was said of the king of Judah; “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart;” or as is said of another, “not like David his father.”

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## HIS PLACE OURS,

IN HEAVEN OR ON EARTH.

One place have I in heaven above,  
 The glory of His throne;  
 On this dark earth, whence He is gone,  
 I have one place alone.  
 And if His throne in heaven I know,  
 I joy to find His path below.  
 We meet to own that place alone,  
 Around the broken bread;  
 The “dead,”\* whose life is hid with Christ,  
 Remembering Jesus dead.  
 For us is quenched all earthly light;  
 Above, the glory—here, the night.

\* Col. iii. 3.

## 380      A VOICE TO THE FAITHFUL.

Dear as the place beside Him there,  
     His footsteps here below.  
 Where He has gone thro' scorn and wrong  
     There also would I go.  
 Lord, where thou diedst I would die:  
 For where Thou livest, there am I.  
  
 One lonely path across the waste—  
     Thy lowly path of shame;  
 I would adore thy wondrous grace,  
     That I should tread the same.  
 The stranger and the alien Thou—  
 And I the stranger, alien, now.  
  
 Thy cross a mighty barrier stands  
     Between the world and me:  
 Not yielding with reluctant hands,  
     But glorying to be free  
 From that which now is dung and dross,  
 Beside Thy glory and Thy cross.  
  
 I see Him there amidst the light,  
     The Father's blessed Son,  
 I know that I am with Him there,  
     That light and love my own.  
 What has this barren world to give,  
 If there in His deep joy I live?  
  
 Sent hither from that glorious home,  
     As He was sent before,  
 Of that great love from whence I come,  
     To witness evermore.  
 For this would I count all things loss—  
 His joy, His glory, and His cross.

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