

THE

“C. S.”

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Plain Dialogues on Solemn Subjects,

FOR THIS PRESENT TIME.

No. 1.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL OF GOD?

Mr. Hope-to-be-saved. Good morning, Christian, I am glad to have the pleasure of your company. There are several things I wish to talk over with you. We seem to live in strange times. A sort of feeling of uncertainty as to what is coming next.

Christian. There certainly is all that you say, and more; only if our minds were truly subject to God's word, we need not be in any doubt as to what is about to take place. But before we look at the *future*, suppose we ask the question, What has taken place? *What is the present state of Christendom?*

Hope-to-be-saved. Well, I must say, though I have been told over and over again, that things are getting better, I am compelled to say, the very things I look to—I mean man's churches—are crumbling to pieces. What do you think about it?

Christian. Looking at this matter in the light of scripture, the present scene presents a sad picture. But to begin at the foundation; every observant Christian must have felt that a remarkable darkness has fallen upon the people of protestant countries during these last few years. Not but that the path of the Just One, Christ, shines brighter and brighter, unto the

perfect day. And the increase of light, and blessing, is as remarkable as the darkness around. And we may say, even as to the gospel itself, if you will only visit the mass of professors, talk with them, as you travel by rail or boat, you will find that, as to man's state, and God's righteous salvation, protestant countries are fast sinking into the darkness of the middle ages, as men call them.

Hope-to-be-saved. You surprise me. I thought everybody, at least in England, knew what the gospel is!

Christian. Well, my dear friend, will you tell me what you think the gospel is?

Hope-to-be-saved. Why in a few words the gospel is this: we must believe in Christ, and do the best we can, you know. A man must have faith and good works too, or he never can be saved, that's clear, is it not? The best illustration I ever heard of the way to be saved, as I understand it, was this. There was a very celebrated preacher, who thought that faith in Christ was enough for salvation; and this preacher, John, was in a boat on a river, with another old preacher. "Now," says the old preacher, "John, take that oar, and pull as hard as you can." John did pull, and lo, the boat began going round and round, in a circle. "Now John," says the old preacher, "lay that oar down;" and John did so. "Now, John, take this other oar, and pull at this other side," when behold, the boat began to go round and round at the other side. "The first oar," says the old preacher, "is faith, and this second oar is works. Don't you see, John? if you have *only* faith in Christ, you can never be saved. And if you have only good works, you can never be saved. But if you have both faith and good works, then you pull, and sail gloriously up the river of salvation." From that day, Preacher John preached faith and good works, for salvation; and so do thousands of his followers; and that is what I understand

to be the gospel; and that is how I hope to be saved. Don't you think this is the gospel?

Christian. No doubt it may be the gospel of Preacher John. It is a fair picture of the gospel of many; of the great mass now. And it would be most difficult to shew the shade of difference betwixt it, and the gospel of Romanists. But it would be almost impossible to find anything more unlike the gospel of God.

Hope-to-be-saved. How? in what way?

Christian. In every way. Don't you see that if you could be saved in that way, then when you arrive in heaven, you could shout "Worthy am I, and Christ!" or, "Worthy the Lamb, and worthy am I." Which would you put first?

At all events, one oar had as much to do with it as the other—therefore this gospel would just exalt man one half, and rob Christ one half; only, as many say, "We must do our part, and then He will do His. The more we love God, the more He will love us." Does not this say, "I must be first, and Christ second?"

Hope-to-be-saved. I never thought of it in that way. I don't like the thought of robbing Christ, to exalt myself; but certainly if I pull one oar, that is, if salvation is just half my own work, it does look as if a half Saviour would do for me. But, must there not be good works?

Christian. Certainly; only let us look at that in its proper place. Don't you know that God has sent us a letter on this very subject—THE GOSPEL OF GOD?

Hope-to-be-saved. You speak so strangely—at least it seems so to me; I don't exactly know what you mean.

Christian. What I mean is this. Paul's letter, or Epistle to the Romans, is so distinctly the Gospel of God, written so entirely by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that we may read it as God speaking to us

Himself. Surely I do not doubt the inspiration of all scripture, and all scripture is equally God's message to man. But if you ask what is the gospel; the Romans answers, and unfolds, that special question.

Now in this letter you will not find man a puller—able to pull either one oar or the other. But man is described as lost, under three aspects or characters.

MAN IS

1. A sinner under judgment.—Rom. iii.
2. Without strength.—Rom. v.
3. Shut up in unbelief.—Rom. xi.

God has met man's need

1. In righteousness through redemption.
2. In love: for when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

3. In mercy. To us Gentiles, to Saul of Tarsus, and in the future, to Israel, when sunk in unbelief. As he says to Timothy, "But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly *in unbelief*." (1 Tim. i. 13.) And the same mercy will be shewn to Israel in days to come; "For God hath concluded all [or shut all up together] in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." (Romans xi. 32.) Now, if we take up these three aspects of man's condition, and the way of God in His gospel in meeting each, we shall find man's gospel, of doing his best and rowing with both hands, a simple denial of God's gospel.

Hope-to-be-saved. Well, do make it as plain as you can find words, for I can assure you it is a matter of all importance to me. I confess, my gospel never gives me real comfort; for I may just tell you, I never feel quite sure that I do do my best. Nay, I may say, I feel I don't do my best; and so, how can I be sure I am saved? But where is the difference betwixt my gospel and God's gospel?

Christian. You say, "I must believe in Christ, and do my best." God begins with you on the ground that you are lost—under sin and under judgment. But

if you are able to do your best, or if you can row with both hands, you are not lost at all. Look at a man gliding through the waters, rowing so gracefully; do you call that a lost man? Is it not a very little saviour a man needs that can row with both hands to heaven? No wonder so very little is heard of the Saviour where man's gospel is preached. Preacher John could row on the river with one hand, or with both; but the fact is, man is shut up under sin, (Gal. iii. 22.) and without strength to be better. (Rom. v. 6, and vii. 14.) Yes, in this epistle, God tells you plainly, that there is no best in you—that there is no good in you; that there is no strength in you to be better; and fully describes the experience of a rower under law, utterly without strength, fairly sold under sin—under the judgment of God as guilty.

Hope-to-be-saved. Well, I don't know whether all this is in scripture, for I mostly take for granted what the preacher says. One thing I do say, it is uncommonly like what I have found to be true in my experience.

Christian. No doubt, for God says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" there is no difference. But let us now note very carefully how man denies the gospel of God.

God says, all the world is guilty before Him; or, as in the margin, Romans iii. 19, "subject to the judgment of God"—and the judgment, or wages of sin, is death. If a person told you that such a man was in prison, found guilty, under sentence of death—and you said, "Oh no, he is only on probation, and if he does his best he will never be executed"—would not this be a denial of the prisoner's true condition? Now, if man is thus found guilty before God, and under judgment, to say, "No, he is still under probation, and if he does his best he will be saved"—is not this denying, at the outset, man's true condition; and denying what God says about it?

And does not God say man is without strength? Yea, in due time, that is, when fifteen centuries had fully proved, in the history of the Jews, that man was without strength; then Christ died for the ungodly. Does not man deny all this, when he speaks of faith as a thing of his own; and as if he had strength to use it in one hand, and good works in the other? Is it not dreadful, thus to deny God's truth, and deceive man about his real condition? Think of eternal perdition; think that you are not sure of another breath; and to be deceived about a matter of such moment!

Hope-to-be-saved. How do you say God has met man's lost condition, shut up under sin and judgment?

Christian. Nay, my dear sir, what I say is nothing—the righteousness of God has been clearly revealed in His gospel. Justification is free, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. iii. 24.) But, again, this redemption is flatly denied in man's gospel. Let me try to illustrate this. Suppose you were a slave, shut up in slavery, as man is shut up in sin, and a real friend, though an unknown one, paid the price of your redemption—say £1,000—he sends me to tell you, and as soon as you hear the news, you say, “Well, I must do my best to get him to redeem me;” or, “I must do *my* part towards it. I must row with both hands to get redemption from slavery.” Would not all this be simply a denial that the redemption was actually accomplished?

Hope-to-be-saved. Well, but must I not pray for God to shew mercy to me?

Christian. Can the slave, I ask, pray for redemption, if the money has been paid? And has not God shewn mercy? Has not Jesus died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God? The plain question is this, Has redemption been accomplished? If we pray for it to be done, we then deny that Jesus has come in the flesh. Has Jesus finished the blessed work of redemption on the cross? Has God been glorified for ever about sin,

by the death of the cross; so that He has also glorified Jesus, in raising Him from the dead, and receiving Him up to glory? Can you look up to heaven, and see Jesus crowned with glory by this very death of the cross, and then say, "No, He is only worthy of half a crown, and if I do my best, the other half will be due to me?"

Hope-to-be-saved. I think you forget that I said we must believe in Christ, and do—dear, I am almost ashamed to say—*do our best*, after all I have heard: but we do believe in Christ.

Christian. Don't you know a cup of vinegar would spoil a pailful of milk? The work of Christ is absolute perfection. Is not all our doing mixed with sin? Nay, is not doing for salvation, the damning sin of unbelief; the very rejection of free pardon, through the once finished work of Christ? If you attempt to mix your sinful, imperfect works with Christ's, is it not worse than vinegar mixed with milk? Redemption is accomplished. God has raised Jesus from the dead. "Therefore, through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts xiii. 38.) This is the very message of God to every lost sinner. Before ever the sinner can offer one prayer, this is God's pardon, freely proclaimed through Jesus.

Hope-to-be-saved. And have I only to believe it? have I positively nothing to do?

Christian. Would you speak or reason or cavil thus, if as a poor condemned criminal, Her Majesty, the beloved Queen of these realms, were to send her free pardon? Would you cavil about only believing, or would you question her truthfulness, by saying, "Have I nothing to do?" Surely if a Queen's word is her word, God's word is His word. And if you could rest on the bare word of the Queen, you must admit, that faith can rest on the word of God.

Hope-to-be-saved. Oh! sir, if you knew how I have been schooled in the doctrine, that it is not enough to believe, but that man must fulfil certain conditions—that Christ did come and die for the whole world, but yet we must love God with all our hearts, and must keep His holy law, or we never can be saved. I am sure I want to be right; but what you call the gospel of God seems so free, and is all grace, and yet you say, righteousness too; I cannot tell you how different it is from all I have heard from a child; why if I really believed what you say, I should be filled with thankfulness.

Christian. Nay, don't say, if you believed what I say—it is simply if you believed God. It is God who speaks, who proclaims pardon, through Jesus alone. It is Satan who seeks to destroy, or at least neutralize, the gospel, by adding conditions, which man cannot fulfil. Let me give you a simple illustration—suppose a poor man, who has a garden, say a rood of land. Thomas, for so we will call him, has been long ill of spinal complaint. He leans one fine day over his garden gate, looking very sad; he has no seed to set in his garden, and he is completely without strength. Just a picture of man's spiritual condition. A farmer, driving past, pulls up his gig, and says, "Thomas, I see you have not set your garden." "No indeed, sir," says Thomas, "I have not a single potato seed left to plant it with." "Oh indeed," says the farmer. "Well, I say, Thomas, you come up to my house to-morrow, and bring a sack, and you shall have it full, and welcome." Kind-hearted farmer! what good is such a promise as this to a man who has neither a sack, nor a back that can carry a sack? The condition completely neutralizes the promise.

But now another farmer comes by. "Well, Thomas," says he, "I see you have not set your garden yet." Thomas acknowledges the fact, with a downcast look. "Which is the lowest place in your hedge, Thomas?"

says the farmer, "for I have plenty of potatoes to set your garden, and to spare, and I am just thinking I will put a sack in my light cart, and bring it down, and shoot it over your garden hedge." And the farmer was as good as his word. The next day his promise was fulfilled.

Hope-to-be-saved. Oh, I think I begin to see; does it not say something about the grace of God that BRINGETH salvation, and something about the *promise being sure*?

Christian. That is just what the faith of Abraham looked at. The promise was sure. It was God who promised in pure grace. That is, unconditional favour. Yes, the apostle shews the promise made sure in Christ, more than 400 years before the system of conditions was made known. (Gal. iii.) The promise of a sack of seed was a good thing. But who could doubt the farmer's kindness when they saw him bring the sack? The promise of God was very sure to faith. But what shall we say now that God has fulfilled the promise? Redemption is an accomplished fact. But the thought of condition must deny this; or at least leave the soul in doubt of it.

Hope-to-be-saved. Then have I nothing to do but to believe?

Christian. Why, now, what else can you do, if the work of redemption was done eighteen centuries before you were born—the whole question of sin settled and put away for ever for all who believe?

Hope-to-be-saved. Have I not to come to Christ?

Christian. Well, if you please, but would it not be more correct to say, Christ came down from heaven for you; yes, to the cross for you? and even now, by the Spirit, comes to you, bringing salvation? If you mean by coming to Christ, letting go every false hope, and finding full, everlasting rest in Christ by simple faith alone; then, God grant that you may come this moment!

Hope-to-be-saved. But, surely, must I not repent?

Christian. Oh, certainly; but you will never repent by looking at yourself. While Job looked at himself, he thought he was the best man in the gate of his city. But in Job's last chapter he says, "but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Look at Jesus on the cross; see there what sin is, and what it cost. Behold the HOLY, HOLY ONE, until like Job you judge and abhor yourself. Our blessed Jesus tells us the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. And don't you read, that they *believed God*; and then proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even unto the least? The more simply you believe God, the more deep and real will be your repentance.

Hope-to-be-saved. Why, Christian, I thought you did not believe in repentance. Is it true, then, that repentance must go before salvation?

Christian. Ah, that is the point. Let us put it thus: Must I repent, and give up my sins, in order that I may find salvation, or that God may save me?

Hope-to-be-saved. Yes, just so.

Christian. Now, my dear *Hope-to-be-saved*, have you a little more time to spare? as I should like to tell you a little story, that happened to me, a few years ago, that will illustrate this point.

Hope-to-be-saved. I shall be delighted to hear it; indeed this repentance gives me great perplexity.

Christian. Very well then, I must tell you, I went a few years ago to my native village after a long absence. I remembered there was a man of the name of Frankey, who, when I was a boy, was always talking about repentance. I called to see the (now) old man, upwards of eighty. And after a little conversation about olden times, I said, "Well, Frankey, what is your prospect of eternity?" "Well, my lad," said he, "we must begin in good earnest" (the same

as his words forty years ago). "What must we begin to do?" said I. "Why," said he, "we must repent deeply, for our sins, and weep over them." "Let us see, Frankey," said I, "how much rent do you pay for your bit of land?" "Forty pund, lad." "You seem rather bad of rheumatics, Frankey?" "Aye, lad, I can't walk across t' floor." "Well, Frankey, how much crying, and tears, would pay your rent?" "Oh lad, I might cry me een up, but crying would ne'er pay forty pund rent." "That is true," said I. "But now, Frankey, if that gentleman who lives at the top of the hill were to pay your rent, and just lift up the door sneck, and say, 'Frankey, it's done, I have paid your rent—I knew you were without strength—I have done it, and here is the receipt:' now, Frankey, what would you do then?" You should have seen how the old face brightened up. "Why, lad," said he, "I should cry for joy, to think he had done such a thing." "Yes, Frankey, and that is true repentance. It is the kindness of God, in the gift of His Son that, leads to true repentance. Oh! to think that He has done such a thing! I don't repent to get Him to do it; but because He has done it." Poor old Frankey! there was darkness of long years of false teaching upon him. Never before had he seen that the work of redemption had all been done first. And the belief of this produces repentance.

Hope-to-be-saved. It is plain that Jesus did not die for our sins because we repented, but because God so loved us.

Christian. Yes, and so loved us when we were shut up under sin, without strength to be better. "He spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all." Can our sins be washed away with tears? Can our tears add to the value of the blood of Jesus? Do you believe Jesus to be the Son of God? Then was not His atoning death infinite in value for all who believe? Oh, for a vile sinner to think of adding any-

thing, in any way, to its value before God. Is it not an insult to the Holy One, the Just One, who died for the unjust, to bring us to God?

Hope-to-be-saved. You make me feel as if I had never believed God.

Christian. I am thankful to hear you say so. The moment you really do believe God, your name will be changed. For the present, I must leave you to ponder this question—Do I believe God?*

C. S.

* No. 2 (if the Lord will,) will take up the question, "Do you believe God?"



Plain Dialogues on Solemn Subjects,

FOR THIS PRESENT TIME.

No. 2.

DO YOU BELIEVE GOD?

Anxious Enquirer. The last question you put to me has filled me with anxiety—Do I believe God? All that I can say is this, I am anxious to know God's truth; and so to believe it that I may have the certainty of my salvation.

Christian. I am truly glad to hear you say so; I trust this anxiety is the work of the Spirit of God. I have been reading lately of an anxious soul, and if you will turn to Acts viii. 26—39 we will read it together. "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How

can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Anxious Enquirer. How strange that the eunuch should find salvation so soon, and go on his way rejoicing; whilst I have made a profession so long, and yet seem as far off as ever.

Christian. The eunuch also may have made a profession; had he not been to Jerusalem to worship, and yet a stranger to Jesus and a stranger to himself? This conversion is carefully marked in scripture. The angel of the Lord directed Philip to the place, and the Spirit directed him to this very person.

Anxious Enquirer. I had not noticed that. Do you think it is to fix our attention on this remarkable instance?

Christian. I have no doubt of it. Have you noticed there are two things in this scripture—the death of the Lord Jesus *for* our sins, as the Lamb of God; and the death of the *eunuch* with the Lord Jesus? These are two most important truths of God.

Anxious Enquirer. I had only thought of the former.

Christian. Well, let us carefully look at both; and then I would ask you, Do you believe God as to these two things? Philip preached unto him Jesus. That suffering One, bearing our iniquities, in Isaiah liii., was thus set before him, just as I would now set Him before you. Look at that holy, bleeding Jesus on the cross, and remember this is all of God! “God so loved,” &c. Do you believe God as thus revealed in the cross of Christ? He gave His beloved Son thus to die. Do you believe your sins were so great in His sight, that no less a ransom could redeem you to Himself? This is the truth of God. On this earth this wondrous work has actually been accomplished. There was one word especially arrested the eunuch—“For his life is taken from the earth.” (Ver. 33.) This is the full expression of the love of God to the guilty. God commends and expresses His love in this very way. There is the word and the act of God—all of God. What did it cost Him to forsake the Holy One? Do you believe God as thus revealed on the cross? If a friend sent you a gift, as the expression of his love, would you not believe him? Surely, love must be equal to the gift. Then, I ask, Is not God this friend? Do you, then, believe this unmerited love? Oh! such was His love to us, “it pleased the Lord to bruise him.” “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.” Such was my sin in the sight of God, that nothing could put it away but the atoning death of my Lord. All this revealed God in a new light to the eunuch. But when he found that His life was taken

from the earth, then did he say, as it were, Let my life too be taken away from the earth. "See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?" He died for me, let me die with Him.

Anxious Enquirer. What is baptism? What do you mean by dying with Jesus?

Christian. Baptism is the justification of God. When the believer is thus buried in baptism, he owns by faith the righteousness of God: the righteous sentence of God upon himself as a lost son of Adam.

Anxious Enquirer. Could you give me an illustration? I should so like to understand this.

Christian. I will try to give you a plain one. Suppose you call to see a sick friend, but on arrival you find he is dead. You try to comfort the late friends of the corpse; and then you advise them to send for the undertaker. Oh dear no, say they, he is not dead; we must send for the doctor. Mark, the point at issue is the Grave or a Doctor! After a few hours, the friends are convinced he is really dead; they justify your word, and, instead of the doctor, the grave receives the poor decomposing corpse.

Anxious Enquirer. Oh! I see; the point at issue—between God's truth and man's error—is this, Does man need the doctor, or is he only fit for the grave? Is he ill with sin, and does he need the help of religion? or is he dead in sins, and does he need redemption and a new life?

Christian. Exactly so. The epistles prove most distinctly, yea, God's word declares, man to be dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph. ii. 1—8.) All have also sinned, and are under the just judgment of God. (Rom. iii. 19. See margin.) As the eunuch judged, so says the apostle, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." (2 Cor. v. 14.) Therefore, says

the eunuch, Here is water, why not let me own the judgment of God? let me be buried here at once, on the spot. Thus he justified God. He owned the full redemption in the precious death of Jesus for him; and then he gave himself up as entirely dead with Him. All that he was as an Ethiopian, all that he was as a religious man (for he had been to Jerusalem to worship); yes, all he was as a child of the first Adam, he committed to the grave, buried with Christ. Thus his sins had been put away by the atoning death of Jesus: himself had been put away by burial with Jesus. Baptism was a beautiful figure of this, and hence, when he came up out of the water, a Christian in all the power of the life of the risen Christ, what could he do but go on his way rejoicing?

Anxious Enquirer. Did you say the epistles bear out this double view; the death of Christ for us, and the believer's death with Him?

Christian. If you turn to the Epistle to the Romans, you will find both these truths equally developed; yea, in these two things the righteousness of God is revealed. If you read carefully, you will find the death of Jesus for our sins is the theme up to chapter v. 11. Then, from verse 12, sin is the subject; and our justification from *sin* is by being dead with Christ. This is most plainly proved in chapter vi. Believing God—who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification—we are thus reckoned righteous before God. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now let us take this part first. Do you really believe God raised Jesus from the dead, having died for your sins? Did He thus declare your sins had been borne by His Son, and could He thus announce *to you*, through Jesus, the full and everlasting forgiveness of your sins? Do you believe God in this? Did He do this to give you peace,

or to deceive you? Will He thus forgive you, and then on some dreadful day judge you for those sins again? Does not His very righteousness make this impossible?

Anxious Enquirer. Oh, I am sure God is true.

Christian. Very well, then; He announces to you, through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins; and it is true, that all who believe Him are forgiven. And it is true, "their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." And whilst it is quite true that all this is proved to the believer, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Jesus risen and ascended to heaven is the believer's evidence, that his sins are put away for ever. But He was also raised from the dead for the special purpose of being our ever-subsisting righteousness: in this sense He was raised for our justification.

Anxious Enquirer. That is deeply interesting: it does seem as if God had so completely met our case. I seem as if I did really believe the forgiveness of sins, my sins, through the death of Jesus. But I have still a sinful nature, and the more I try to be religious, the more troubled I am about sin.

Christian. Well, I am glad you have had this trouble; but do not you remember how the eunuch was delivered from this trouble?

Anxious Enquirer. I do not think I understand that part of it yet.

Christian. Then will you look over Romans vi. and just read it as a comment on the burial of the Ethiopian? He was delivered from himself, so to speak, by owning he was dead, and taking the place of death, with Christ. And in this chapter the true ground for the Christian is to know himself dead, crucified, buried. No question of religious medicine, but burial with Christ. He, and he only, who is dead, is justified from sin.

Anxious Enquirer. Do you mean the sin of my nature?

Christian. Undoubtedly that is what this chapter means throughout—dead with Christ. This is what we are to reckon ourselves to be. For this is just what God reckons. Our sins blotted out by His precious blood, and our old selves blotted out as dead with Him.

Anxious Enquirer. If I, as a sinful man, am thus blotted out, or crucified, how can I live at all?

Christian. My dear sir, hear the apostle. “Not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” This is most plain—if we have been crucified with Christ, we are also raised up from the dead in Him. (Eph. ii. 6.) Do you thus justify God? Do you believe that if one died for all, then were all dead? Nothing could be a more complete deliverance than this, from sin, self, and law: for the law neither says, Thou shalt, or thou shalt not, to a dead man.

Anxious Enquirer. Stop a moment. Do you mean by this that I may break the law?

Christian. Break the law! my dear sir? Dead men do not break law. The moment I try to be alive under it, I shall break it. The apostle declares he found it so. If I am dead, I am not under it, and therefore sin shall not have dominion over me. The utmost curse of the law had been fulfilled in the death of Jesus for them that were under law. And now, as reckoned dead with Him, I repeat, dead men are neither under law nor do they break it. Nay, this very argument is used by the Holy Ghost, our being reckoned dead and risen with Christ as the reason why sin shall not have the dominion over us. All this was strikingly illustrated in the eunuch. Christ had died for his sins. He was

now dead and buried with him; and as a new creature in the risen Christ he went on his way rejoicing. Old things had passed away—both his sins and himself—and all had become new, a new life, a new self, so to speak, a new creation, and all of God. Do you believe we are so bad? Do you believe God is so good? Can you say, In me, that is, in my flesh, my old self, there dwelleth no good thing. Let me be buried as a vile sinner. I have not a little finger fit to live. Vile, dead, corrupt, bury me out of sight. Oh never to look at myself again! All bad. “Here is water; what doth hinder?” Now henceforth let Christ be all. Can you say, My all? Job said, I am vile. The eunuch said, Let me be buried.

Anxious Enquirer. Well, I never saw such a complete riddance of self.

Christian. It is God’s riddance, and the only one. The eunuch saw it at once. Now it takes (through false teaching) many a long year fairly to give up old, vile, black self, and then go on rejoicing. Whilst I am seeking righteousness by keeping the law, I do not believe God a bit. I am saying, I am not bad enough for the coffin, let me have the doctor. Had the rabble shouted at me, “Away with him! Crucify him! he is not fit to live,” they would have judged rightly. And they shouted at my holy Substitute. In Him I will rejoice. He died for me. I die with Him.

Anxious Enquirer. Do you mean, then, that if I am dead to sin, and no longer looked at as alive in the flesh, or old vile nature, that therefore there is no sin in me, or no evil nature left in me?

Christian. Oh dear, no! far from that. Such a thought, such confusion, would destroy if possible the very gospel. The fact is, that though I am not in the flesh, or under the dominion of sin, yet it is true that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that

which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John iii.) And "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye might not do the things that ye would" [as it should be translated]. (Gal. v.) All this is solemnly true, that vile nature is never mended: that old heart is never changed. But this does not alter the blessed fact, that God hath given the believer a new nature and a new heart. Oh is not the thought of sin terrible! It makes the oldest Christian groan to look at it, as we see in the type of Hezekiah, after long years of patient, prayerful victory; yet at last, when he looked at a boil, picture of what the flesh is spiritually, he says, O LORD, I AM OPPRESSED; UNDERTAKE FOR ME." And then what words—"What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it." (Isaiah xxxviii.) Yes, dear anxious enquirer, if you put yourself under law with a hope to be better, you will sink in despair. But God hath spoken to you, and He hath done it. Our blessed Jesus has undertaken for us, and He hath done it. Do you believe this? Then cannot you, with Paul, say, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord?" I do again ask, Do you believe God, both as to the announcement of forgiveness of sins through the death of the Lord Jesus; and justification from sin, as passing through death with Him into resurrection? He having been judged for your sin as well as sins—made a sacrifice for sin? (Rom. viii. 3.)

Anxious Enquirer. I never felt so stripped before—I see I am nothing but sin. It must be all Christ, or I am everlastingly lost.

Christian. That is most true. But has He not undertaken the whole thing for you, sins and sin? Has He not done it? Does He not shew you His hands and His feet? What does He say? "Peace unto you."

Anxious Enquirer. He is just the complete Saviour for me.

Christian. Thank God, He is; and there is a completeness in Him I have not yet spoken of. If there is nothing but sin in you, that is, in your flesh; and you, as a sinful man, are judged and condemned to death, how are you to stand in everlasting righteousness before God?

Anxious Enquirer. That is a point indeed. Do tell me how God has met it.

Christian. God has raised Jesus from the dead for our justification. Jesus is our subsisting righteousness. For God hath made Him to be this to us, even "Wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) Oh, the gift of God! oh, the riches of His grace! Look up by faith to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens: the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus our righteousness. Do you want another?

Anxious Enquirer. Enough! Enough for God, enough for me. Let me now think of Jesus, my all. He is God's gift for me and to me. I do believe God.

Reader, a word with you. I was travelling lately in France. One of my fellow-passengers to Paris was an intelligent Roman Catholic. The subject of our conversation was the case of Miss Saurin. I said to him, "What is your thought, or what is the thought of Roman Catholics, as to all the degradation and misery endured in a monastery or nunnery?" "Well, sir," said he, "we are all sinners." "That is most true," said I. Then said he, "We believe sin must have its punishment." "I believe the same in my very heart," said I. "Very well, then, we believe the more suffering for sin we have in this world, the less we shall have

in the next." I thought this was very fairly put. I then said, "You Roman Catholics, then, do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" "Oh dear! yes, sir," said he; "we certainly believe that Jesus is the Son of God." "Impossible," said I. "Let me explain. Do you believe that Jesus is the *infinite* person of the Son of God? Then the sacrifice that He offered once for sins must be, like Himself, *infinite*. Let me illustrate what I mean. Suppose I speak of an infinite line passing through all space. Now, if you said you could add a yard to that line, would not that be a frank denial of the fact that the line is infinite? If you spoke of adding a foot, or an inch, or the breadth of a hair of your head to it, would not that deny that it was infinite? Can anything be clearer than this, that you cannot add to that which is infinite? Now, the infinite Son of God gave Himself an infinite sacrifice for sins to God; for if He be infinite, then His work on the cross must be infinite. But if you talk of adding to this infinite death of the cross, you must by this really deny that the sacrifice was infinite; and if the sacrifice was not infinite, then He who offered it, even Himself, could not be infinite. And thus every act of suffering for sin; every mass, as a sacrifice for sin; every thought of purgatory, as a future state of suffering for sin, as an addition to the atoning death of Jesus for our sins who believe, is a distinct denial that Jesus is infinite in his person and work, and therefore a denial that Jesus is the Son of God."

My friend did not feel the full force of all this at the moment, and wanted to fall into discussion as to which was the right church. "Oh, no," said I, "let you and me have no angry discussion at all. It is the question of your soul's salvation that is on my heart. You are a finite creature, a man, a fallen sinful man. God knows you, and knows how often you have tried to be righteous, and how very dreadful you have found sin to be. You have heard mass, you have determined to

be better; but, after all, how terrible is death and judgment to you, when you really think of it! You, I say, are a finite man. God has given His infinite Son. Now, the infinite must cover the finite. Can you think of this—that God gave, in pure love, His own Son to bear the believer's sins? Infinite sacrifice, for ever perfecting all who believe God in this infinite gift. Has the infinite Son of God thus died for us? And dare you deny it, and seek to add a mass, or suffering here or hereafter, to this work of Jesus on the cross?"

All desire for angry discussion was now gone. My friend began to see how God had met the need of the poor finite by the death of the Infinite, and that the Infinite must cover the finite. Very sweet to his soul was the announcement of God by Paul in Acts xiii. 38: "Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." It is God that speaks to you, my reader, in these words; Do you believe God?

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now if we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God—infinite in His own person—then in this scripture we must see the infinite love of God to us and the infinite sacrifice for our sins. Do you believe this? What perfect peace this gives. If the love of God be infinite to us, then do we need the intercession of saints or angels? Can anything add to the infinite love of God? Is not every prayer to Mary, the mother of Jesus, a denial that Jesus is the Son of God? Jesus Himself is the infinite expression of that love—the very manifestation of the love of God to us. Oh yes, I know all this is denied by man. But do you believe God? And

if God sent his *Son* to be the propitiation for our sins, is not that propitiation infinite? Can any mass, sacrament, or work add to that which is infinite? Impossible! for Jesus is the Son of God. But God sent His Son to be this. Will you deny this? Will you doubt this? Mark, the mass is a direct denial of this. It pretends to add to, or to prolong, that which was once—for ever—accomplished, and is infinite. And mark, every doubt of the human heart is also, in its very essence, a denial of the infinite propitiation for our sins. Oh how suited to each other, the darkness of Rome, and the darkness of the human heart. If I owed twenty shillings, and a friend, without asking, sent twenty pounds to pay it, could I beg of some one to go and intercede for me with that friend and beg of him to send me a few shillings towards the twenty shillings? or could I think of adding a shilling of my own, to make twenty pounds pay twenty shillings? And yet it is thus we treat God. We go to Mary, or the saints, to entreat God to save us, and thus *deny that He has sent Jesus* the Son of God to be the infinite propitiation for our sins, or, which is quite as bad, we try to add a little feeling, or repenting, or doing, or a little faith, or love, or supposed holiness, or something else, to the *one* infinite sacrifice for sins. I say this is as bad. It is the same thing in principle as the mass, purgatory, or human intercession. All this reasoning, doubts the sincerity of the infinite love of God, in *sending* His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God, in sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, has done that to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away.

This is what we testify, "That the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." This perfect love casteth out all fear. I am not aware that there can be any middle place, betwixt receiving this witness of God, or making

Him a liar. If I doubted my friend, who had paid his twenty pounds, to meet my debt of twenty shillings—if I said There is one short and I must make it up, what would you call this? Would it not be making him a liar? “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

Is it not a momentous question—do you believe God? Surely this is the first question to settle. Let me put the question slowly. Do you believe that God gave His Son to die the infinite sacrifice for your sins? Do you believe that God raised Him from among the dead, to be your righteousness? Do you believe that God hath given to you eternal life, and this life is in His Son? “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” Have you on the testimony of God this eternal life? Are your sins put away by an infinite propitiation for sins? Can you look up by faith to heaven, and say, That glorious, infinite Son of God is my everlasting righteousness? Salvation is wholly of God. “Sent his Son!” Could He love you more? could anything add to, or increase that love? Then it is not infinite. And “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

Do you say, Must I not serve God? How can you serve God until you believe Him? For “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” Did Israel serve God before they were redeemed from Egypt?

Look at the beautiful order, in the case of the man whose eyes Jesus had opened. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." (John ix. 35—38.)

If you, my reader, now see Jesus, the infinite Son of God, once offered the infinite sacrifice for your sins, now your righteousness and eternal life, your happy place is now a worshipper for ever cleansed. For ever sanctified, you need no priest on earth; no mass or intercessor. An infinite Saviour can leave nothing incomplete. Rest on Him, your great High Priest, passed into the heavens. You will find His present, tender, gracious, loving, priestly care, as perfect as His one offering on the cross. Yes, He is crowned with glory, having tasted death; and perfect through sufferings, as the Captain of our salvation.

The more we see our need, the more do we also see how God has met all, in the gift of His own Son.

Do you say, Well, I do believe God. Then can you say, I am saved with an everlasting salvation? If one be true the other must; for all who believe God are justified from all things. It must be so; the Infinite must cover the finite. Oh! give up the thought of adding a rag to the infinite robe. Let Christ be all.

What! has some one taken up this little paper who despises and rejects this infinite love? Do you know that God is about to give all such up to "strong delusion, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness?" I warn you, if you reject Christ, there is no folly you may not at once fall into. What a spectacle of late in *London* even—five hundred poor deceived souls, having rejected Christ, and the complete salvation through Him, have openly declared their faith in a farthing can-

dle to light them through the dark valley of the shadow of death. What a sign of the times! Gross darkness, and open infidelity, fast settling upon the face of the people! May God awake you, and reveal His love to you as manifested in Jesus the Son of God! Let me beg of you, take the word of God, as it is indeed the word of God; human tradition has made it of none effect to multitudes; but only those who really regard it as God speaking to them in Christ the Son, can form any idea of its divine preciousness and comfort. Take this one verse, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Could anything give more absolute certainty to the believer than this? Believing God, who sent Jesus, we have passed from death unto life; have everlasting life; shall not come into condemnation. Did it ever occur to you, that if you are a believer all this is true to you?

One word more. Do not misunderstand the illustration of the twenty pounds paying with certainty the debt of twenty shillings, as though something short of the infinite sacrifice could have met the sins of the finite creature. No: such is sin in the sight of God, that nothing short of the death of His Son could atone for it. But He has atoned for it by His death on the cross, forsaken of God, and the announcement of forgiveness through that infinite sacrifice is a fact and a certainty.

"IT IS FINISHED." "PEACE UNTO YOU."

C. S.

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THE OAKS EXPLOSION.

MANY indeed are the lessons taught by this sad event; lessons which have been dwelt upon by others. But on each of my visits to the pit, one lesson has been deeply impressed on my own mind. As I stood over the dying and the dead buried deep in the sulphureous pit, I felt how forcibly the condition of these poor men illustrated the condition of this whole world, buried in darkness and sin; and as I thought of those below, I felt that nothing short of raising them out from among the dead, could possibly be good news. The living were as helpless as the dead to save themselves from that terrible deep. I looked at and talked with the men who were brought up in the last cage. In fifteen minutes later, each of those men would have been a burnt and blackened corpse. The rope that was let down with its cage to the bottom, had brought them up to the top. Faith is God's rope—His gift, and it never breaks. But I desire to keep to the one lesson so impressed on my heart, that it can never be forgotten, and it is this, that just as *raising* these poor miners out of the pit was the only remedy; so through Jesus, RESURRECTION from among the dead is God's only salvation.

I had been reading the word of God with some of these miners only a few days before the explosion (one of them little thought that he would so soon barely

escape from so terrible a death). He was one of the last batch drawn out. I was very much struck with a question one of these miners put to me. He said, "Will you tell me, If man is really so bad that he cannot get out of the pit of sin; how is he to be judged for not doing what he can't do?" Well, I certainly should have been surprised, as I walked about the Oaks pit bank only a few days after, if I had heard any person casting a shadow of blame on those poor men, because they did not get out of the pit. Clearly they could not. How could they climb up 300 yards of that dark pit shaft? Nay, could they stand? No one would believe me, that there was a person in the pit alive, though I begged to be allowed to go and give a signal down the pit. Many hours after, one man was got out alive; but he had to be fetched out. Oh! how my heart beat, during those terrible hours, for one dear to me in Christ, down so deep below; and I felt how utterly useless it would be, even if a message could have been heard below, to have told them to do their utmost to get out of the pit. You see this, my reader, do you not? Could an engineer in his senses have proposed any such plan of deliverance? No. Again I repeat, If there be no raising them up out of the pit, then there is no remedy. Now I fully admit man's moral condition to be as bad. His case as helpless and desperate. Nay, I wish to shew that Scripture views him exactly in this position. "Every mouth stopped and all the world guilty before God," or subject to the judgment of God. (Rom. iii. 19.) "The scripture hath concluded all under sin." (Gal. iii. 22.) For 1500 years man had had the fullest opportunity of

getting out of the pit of sin if he could, and especially had one nation been tried. They had the oracles of God, they had the law of God; but the law was a ladder far too short to reach the top of the shaft. If man could have climbed to the topmost commandment, this could not have raised him out of that depth of sin, and death, into which he was fallen. It could never give him sweet life out at the top. No; man's utmost effort only proved this—that there was no remedy, no salvation, but by being raised out of the pit.

Let us now look at 1 Corinthians xv., and I think you will say with me, that nothing could more strikingly illustrate God's way of salvation, than this awful explosion. This chapter, you notice, from verse 1, is the gospel that Paul preached, and the gospel by which they were saved in those days. But have you ever noticed that in this gospel, as stated here, there is not one word about what the sinner is to do to get out of the pit of sin? No; Paul has a better gospel than telling man to do what he cannot do, as the old man said at the reading meeting. Do you not see that, my reader? It is not man being judged for not doing what he cannot do. But this gospel is altogether about what another has done, in coming down into this pit of sin, that He might seek and save that which is lost.

You could not blame one of those miners in the pit for not climbing out when they could not; but what would you say when the cage was let down, and the noble volunteer going down at the price of his own life, and then the lost miner says, "I won't be saved." Ah! this is the question: Does Jesus stand on the pit bank, asking man to climb out, and then judge him to

everlasting perdition, because he does not do what he cannot do? or, has He come down to the bottom, in infinite love? And thus, my reader, if you perish everlastingly, it is because you refuse to be saved.

But let us look a little more closely at the chapter. How simple and how glorious the gospel of God. The very first foundation-truth of the gospel is this, "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures." Is this anything I have done for Him? Oh! how deep has He descended for me, down to the very place in the pit where I was! "Made sin for us"—"Died for our sins." Do look at the cross. This is not your climbing out of the pit! It is Jesus coming into the pit to save you by His very death. Have you got fast hold of this first fact? Paul does not begin with what you are to do for Jesus, but with what He has done for us. He does not say that Christ kept the law, and left us an example how we might climb up the law, and get out of the shaft. He was perfect holiness itself, or He would not have been a fit volunteer to die for our sins. (Lev. i., Heb. x.)

And the next fact Paul states is that "he was buried." Forsaken of God on the cross, now dead and buried. He could not do more than this, but He did it, and by doing it He is now crowned with glory. "He rose again the third day according to the scriptures." This is the last fact stated, on which the whole question of salvation rests. And still not a word about man's doings or efforts. No mixture of doing and believing. It is a work done that true faith believes.

And now as everything hangs on the fact of the

resurrection of Christ, how carefully the apostle states and proves that event. He tells who saw the risen Lord from among the dead: "above five hundred brethren at once," and most of these alive at the time this epistle was written. I do not think I can tell you with this pen how forcibly I felt these words, as I preached on the Lord's day after the explosion at the pit bank from this very chapter. As I looked at the smoking pit, I felt if there be no resurrection of these poor men out of this awful pit, then indeed is there no hope. Now this is precisely what the apostle is teaching here. If there be no resurrection, no raising man out of the pit of sin and death; if Christ be not risen, the firstfruit, the pledge of this, then there is no remedy for man whatever. And the gospel is false, and faith is vain. Yes, the apostle states this frankly and fully. Read carefully 1 Corinthians xv. 12—19. This is plain enough, is it not? He has no more thought of a gospel that gradually improves man's nature in sin, than I had a thought of the barest possibility of the improvement of the condition of those poor sufferers in the pit, with all its old works full of gas. Oh! if you had stood with me and seen and heard the thud and roar of that explosion on Lord's day at five p.m., and such a belching out of black smoke, you would indeed have said, There is no help but out at the top. And the Scripture presents no other hope, no other gospel, than through Jesus the resurrection from among the dead, in the deep pit of sin. It was thus the apostles preached. I fully grant it is very difficult to believe this in these days. Most of what we hear, and read, is so different from this gospel of resurrection,

that the word of God seems to be made of none effect by the traditions of men. Some are going back to that system of rites and foolish ceremonies, and repetition sacrifices or masses, which deny the everlasting value of the one sacrifice of Christ; some occupied with fine music, some with mere human eloquence and intellect; others say they are going to get out of the pit of sin, by sorrow and forsaking, as if a man could forsake it when three hundred yards deep. Now where is the use of all this, when the pit is on fire, and explosion follows explosion? And there is no denying that this is the case. Take down the page of history and explore the old works of the pit, and tell me, Is not sin-damp everywhere? Whether we look at the history of nations or of individuals, this terrible sin, like fire-damp in the pit, is ever exploding. Just think of the miner walking in the midst of gas in the pit, perhaps within a few feet of a natural gasometer, and in his hand the flame that may fire the mine. Is not man like this in the midst of a world of sin, carrying in his own nature the sin that at any moment may explode in terrible iniquity?

When once the miner is dead in the pit, all human aid is at an end. But it is just at this point where God in His gospel begins. Man in his activities is seen in the Epistle to the Romans to be utterly powerless for good or to get out of the pit. And in the Ephesians man is looked at as dead in trespasses and sins. There also we have the same gospel of resurrection. The exceeding greatness of the power of God in raising Christ from the dead as Head and representative of His body, the Church, is shewn in the first

chapter. Then the riches of God's mercy and greatness of His grace in saving us, by raising us up from among the dead in Christ, and making us *sit* together in Him in heavenly places. Thus you see it is all resurrection out of the pit.

The Christian knows well God's purpose was not to bless us in earthly places, in this smoking pit. But He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. This was clearly God's thought from eternity, that Christ should not only be the firstborn from among the dead, the first raised out of the pit of death; but that He should be the first-born among many brethren. I repeat, it was not God's thought to improve man's nature in the pit; but to give him an entirely new place with Christ out of the pit. And the beginning and the securing of all this, was the raising up of Christ from the dead. And hence the apostle shews that if Christ be not risen, ye are yet in the pit, in your sins, and there is no hope. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, become the first-fruits of them that slept." And thus, just as certainly as all are dead in Adam, so surely shall all that are in Christ be made alive. Thus the believer is reckoned, even now, dead with Christ and raised from the dead with Christ. For since Christ, who died for his sins, is raised from the dead for his justification and life, he is really now one with this risen Christ. Thus his sins are forgiven. The very sin of his nature not reckoned, but reckoned righteous in Christ. He is thus so really justified from all things, that he has peace with God. As I asked the men drawn last out of the pit, "Are you not really out? you cannot hope

to be drawn up—you are up;” even so the believer is raised out with Christ and is justified. “By grace ye *are* saved” is as true, as it was true, that by the drawing up of the cage those ten men *were* drawn out.

There is another aspect of the resurrection out of the pit. The Christian may say, But am I not, as a matter of fact, yet in this world of sin and death; or, as you say, this pit? And is not sin still in the pit and still in me? No doubt this is the case. And the Scripture distinctly recognizes this also; whilst on the principle of faith, we are reckoned dead with Christ and risen with Him, and thus justified from our sins by His blood, and justified from sin because dead with Him, and for ever justified in Him, because risen with Him. And whilst there can be no condemnation to them who are thus in Christ; yet as to our experience in the body, we still wait for redemption. And what is this redemption but the resurrection of this body? Concerning this very thing the apostle says, “Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Thus when a man is converted to God, as to his complete justification in the risen Christ, why he is clean out at the top. But as to his experience, for a little while he is like a miner, waiting for the moment when the cage shall be drawn out at the coming of the Lord. When the last cage was drawn out at the Oaks, it came up like a shot, and only just in time to escape the blast. O what a moment that will be when the whole Church of God, like the last cage, shall be caught up from this

pit of darkness and sin to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord! Ah! then, no more rude fiery blasts, for though, if in Christ, sin shall not have the dominion, yet the Christian, whilst sure of victory, gets some sore bumps in this dreary pit at times. No, then no more dust, and smoke, and choke-damp. Now the Christian, like the miner below, only breathes the air of heaven, let down to him from above. And it is well for good works to have its upcast, while faith draws its downcast. I have always found that as the fire of love to Jesus and His flock has got low, the stream of fresh communion from my precious Lord has been interrupted and become weak. Indeed both go together. And what care is required in a pit to keep the works in order! and true, if saved, we cannot be too careful to maintain good works. But if I speak of salvation, when a man is seated in the cage, what has he to do, but to rest in the cage until he is drawn out at the top? Even so faith rests in Christ. Now, my reader, if you will just carefully read over 1 Thessalonians, you will find that in those days, the Christian had no other hope than the coming of the Lord to take the Church out of this pit of sin. Let us then, in that sense, look up the shaft and wait for the Lord. It is no use building wood, hay, and stubble, in the pit. What is a Gothic building worth in a pit on fire? What is all the outward show of Christendom worth, when thus tested? Are you thus saying, My Lord delayeth His coming? or are you waiting for the Lord Jesus from heaven? And when the last soul is put in the cage, that is the blood-washed Church of God, and He calls it up with a shout, "For the Lord himself shall

descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Blessed, for ever blessed, to those thus taken up! But what will it be to be left in the pit? Then will take place the last explosion of human wickedness and sin. Yes, if it were not for the certainty of this blessed hope, the knowledge of the judgments that are about to be poured upon the earth would be terrible. The poor miner might have said, If in this Oaks pit we only have hope, then of all colliers we are most miserable. And so the apostle says, If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable. Yes, as the fiery blast writes death on all below in the pit, even so has sin written death on all below in this world. But Christ is risen; and if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

I now turn to the Lord's dealings with one of the late volunteers, the greatly esteemed underground steward of a neighbouring pit. For some eight years I had felt led to preach the gospel to the surrounding colliers in an old romantic quarry, in a small wood; but it was not until a few months before this sad explosion, that the opportunity occurred to do so. In fact, this summer I felt the Lord's time had come. Many came to hear the word, and amongst others the volunteer, J. S. Well do I remember the grave and solemn attention with which he listened to the gospel. This led to

preaching at other places during the evenings amongst the colliers, and one of these places was the pit where J. S. was underground steward. The preaching of a finished work, the security of the believer in the everlasting love of Christ, and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, gave great offence and caused much opposition and persecution, so much so that the preaching room had to be closed to satisfy the opponents of the gospel. But one man stood up in the crowd and opened his house for the preaching of the word: that man was J. S., the lamented volunteer. I have good reason to believe that the Lord blessed him, and all that were in his house. And from that time he and two others, his beloved wife, and a deputy of the same pit, whom the Lord had blessed by the preached word and tracts, spent many of their evenings in meditating over the word of God. And often when they were struck with different portions of the word, he would say, "Yes, but that word, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life,' that is the grand word for my soul." It was the sweet certainty "*hath everlasting life*" gave to his soul. I am told this incorruptible seed of the word, having entered, was ever present to his mind. His wife, and others from the neighbourhood, who had found peace in believing, took their happy places at the table of the Lord, gathered only in His name. Dear J. S. was deeply convinced that nothing else was right on earth, and often said so; but he had not as yet obeyed the Lord in that word "This do in remembrance of me."

But nothing could satisfy him but that preaching that exalted Jesus risen from the dead. A marked change had been observed in his manner and conduct: evidence of the life he had in Christ. Only a few nights before the fatal explosion, he had spent two hours at a neighbour's, speaking of the precious truth he had learnt. In short, he had, through the riches of the grace of God, heard the word of Jesus, and believed God who sent Him. He therefore surely had everlasting life. Have you, my reader, thus heard, and thus believed? The last time the deputy and he read the word together, only a few nights before the explosion, J. S. turned to Psalm lxxxviii., and seemed deeply impressed with the solemnity of the case of the poor boy who some years ago wrote this Psalm on a tin box when shut up to perish in a pit which had fired. In a few more hours these solemn words were true of him, "Counted with them that go down into the pit. . . . In the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. . . . I am shut up and cannot come forth." Oh! my heart was smitten as I stood over the pit, and could not believe he was dead. It is a remarkable fact, that those who knew him since he was saved, as one said, seemed to live with him in that dreadful tomb of death, until a certain hour of a certain day, when at one time (though we were apart), we each realized that he was now absent from the pit, present with the Lord. It is true, the triumph of Christ shall not be complete until his body is raised in glory. But, hush! while you contemplate the fact—absent from that dreadful pit, "present with the Lord." Yes, we can even, because we loved him, rejoice that he is gone before. Now, yes, now with the Lord.

It was my painful duty to break the tidings to his beloved wife that there was no more human hope. Ah! then, that same One who went to Bethany was there. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus was there to sustain. Oh! that every widow of this sad explosion did but know this same Jesus! Yes, the same as when He said to them He loved, "I am the resurrection and the life." Yes, that voice that said, "Lazarus, come forth," shall soon call all who sleep in Him from the grave, wherever that grave may be. Oh! then, how complete the victory of Christ. May our hearts yearn for that fast approaching victory! We shall soon see the departed ones again. Can you say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus?" I do bless God, that in the midst of so much rejection, the Lord did thus bring J. S. to himself. And I do ask the prayers of God's people for the colliers of this dangerous district. Many are exposed to great danger—liable to the same terrible death. Surely they have a great claim on all who love the Lord Jesus, and especially on any whom the Lord may use in spreading the gospel amongst them. I could give some touching incidents of God's preserving care, especially to one who, as I have said, has been brought to the table of the Lord. But I must conclude, with one more word to the reader. You may have felt this paper sets before you a very different gospel from the one you have heard, which is not another gospel; for it is no gospel at all to tell you to do what you find you cannot do. And it would not be gospel if you were only drawn half way up. I look up to heaven and I see Jesus crowned with glory, having died for my sins. Amazing grace! a glory that He

could never have had, had we not been sinners sunk deep in the pit of sin. As was the depth into which He descended for us, such is the height to which He is exalted in glory. But, oh! my fellow believer, He as Jesus could not be there if the whole question of our sins were not settled for ever. On the cross, He said It is finished. Now He shews His hands and His side and says, "Peace unto you."

May God open your eyes to see, and break your heart in self-judgment to own the dreadfulness of sin, of which I have attempted to use this awful pit as a picture! But do not be deceived. Your sense of sin, however deep, cannot save you, any more than the terrible pain of the poor miner can help him out of the pit. Neither can your resolutions to amend help you out. It must be, as Paul puts it in the chapter we have looked at; Jesus alone, to whom be all honour and glory. Amen.

C. S.

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MOUNT ARARAT.

“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”—Genesis vii. 1.

THERE are two ways in which the New Testament speaks of the deluge; one by the Lord in the gospels, as an illustration of prophecy; and the other, as a figure of salvation, in 1 Peter iii. It is in the latter sense I desire to ask my reader's attention. Before doing so, however, it will be well to ponder the solemn statement of our Lord in Matthew xxiv. 37—39, “But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Thus, then, we learn from the lips of Christ, that the present state of this evil, careless world will go on until the very coming of Christ; and that what God saw and said about man then is true now. “And

God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually." "The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." This is what God sees this present world to be still. No doubt, man boasted then of his great progress as he boasts now, but the deluge came. And the Lord shall come in terrible judgment on this age, though as little expected as was the flood.

It was true then, that a time should come when the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. But did that hinder the flood? neither will it hinder the coming of the Son of man to judge the living wicked nations of this age. Until He comes, a few years at most, the earth's wickedness ripens for harvest. Blessed are they who shall be first caught up to meet the Lord in the air. It is a solemn thought to feel assured that that event is *very, very* near. This, however, is not the theme of my present paper, though I can scarcely take my pen and thoughts from it, and may refer to it again.

I desire then to look at the deluge as a figure of salvation.

The end of all flesh was come before God; and is not this the first solemn fact, as to man's present state, declared in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans? whether Jews or Gentiles, all are guilty before God, or subject to the judgment of God. The end of man's probation has come before God. It is too late for

man to talk of being tried again; he is guilty and under condemnation. It is too late for that poor young man, condemned to death, to talk of being tried again. He must be pardoned or executed. Such is man's condition. Man has been tried and found guilty. The end of all flesh is come before God. The poor prisoner may dream he is at large, and hope to commit no more crimes,—but he wakes for execution. Oh! how blind this world is as to its true state before God: and such was the state of the world in the days of Noah. The end of all flesh had come before God. The whole world stood under the sentence of death. No further probation or trial of man. God proposed no remedy for man in the flesh. Death and judgment were determined on the whole scene; and all this a figure of man in his present state. Death is passed upon all men—"for all have sinned." No remedy is proposed for man in the flesh in the gospel. Death and judgment is passed upon the whole race of Adam.

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Noah is thus presented as a representative man—the head of all his house. The striking type of Christ, the Head of the Church, the First-begotten from the dead. In his own person, as a man, it was true of him as of every child of Adam: "there is none righteous, no, not one." But he believed God, condemned the

world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Like as in the case of Abraham, faith was reckoned to Noah for righteousness. But, surely, as a picture of Christ, nothing could be more striking. Just as God took Noah out from among the dead, and raised him up above the billows of judgment, and placed him on the high places of Ararat; so has God taken Jesus out from among the dead, and placed Him above heaven's highest Ararat. And as a new world was to begin in Noah's family from mount Ararat, so in Christ, raised from the dead, God has begun a new creation. Let us, then, examine these words more closely, as setting forth God's thoughts of Christ, and the true figure of our salvation.

It is deeply interesting to see how creation is made to share in this great deliverance. But who can fathom the depth of those words, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." If Shem, Ham, and Japheth were welcome, as sons of Noah, how welcome is every child of God in Christ? "Behold me, and the children whom thou hast given me." Yes, in this touching figure, I hear God saying to Jesus, 'Come thou and all thy house.' Oh! the glad welcome that awaits every child of God into his Father's house above! Welcome as Christ is welcome. No stranger God shall greet us there.

Now notice, most closely, the peculiar reason God assigns for the welcome. "For thee have I seen

righteous before me in this generation." Weigh every word. "*For thee,*" He does not say *for them,* "have I seen righteous." It was not what God saw in Shem, Ham, and Japheth. It is not what He sees in us. God can only look in the face of His adorable Son and say, "*For thee* have I seen righteous before me." "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Blessed Jesus, thou only couldst say, 'I do always those things that please Him.' Every thought of His heart most holy; every act, every word, perfect righteousness before God. Oh, how false is that accusation, that we deny the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ! We regard every doubt, every slight cast on His spotless Person, as from the father of lies, with which we can have no fellowship whatever. And for this we are hated of men.

It may be asked, Then what is the difference betwixt our thoughts of the righteousness of Christ, and the thoughts of those who oppose our writings so bitterly? I will try to explain the difference. We hold the righteousness of Christ in a far stronger, higher sense than our mistaken friends. They hold that man, under law, in the flesh, is not so bad, and that the righteousness of Christ's person, is not so ineffably different from man in the flesh, but that both may be mingled together. The one imputed to the other, so as to make man righteous, under law, before God. To use the Lord's figure, the old garment is

not so rotten but that the new piece may be sewed on to fill it up. Now, we believe the Holy Scriptures teach the very opposite of this—that the end of all flesh is come before God; that man in the flesh is like an old garment, so rotten that it can neither be mended nor worn again; and more, yes, indeed, and more; that though our blessed Lord, when on earth, was in the likeness of sinful flesh, truly and really man, yet so absolutely without sin, so ineffably perfect, that there could be no assimilation between sinless humanity and sinful humanity. No taking of or from one to mingle with or mend the other. This is that solemn truth taught in those words of Jesus, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John xii. 24.) This was that truth that Jesus ever taught, but which His disciples were most slow to understand, That He could be of no use to man in the flesh; He **must** die and rise again; and if they must live they **must first die**. If they loved and kept the life they had, they could not have the life He had to give in resurrection. We are as slow now to learn this lesson as they were then; but until it is learnt, we must remain as dark now as they were then. When Jesus taught this truth, Peter dared to rebuke the Lord. Surely, then, we may patiently bear the same rebuke in this day. (See Mark viii. 31—35.)

This, then, is the great difference of our day.

Some do not see man so bad in the flesh, or Christ so infinitely righteous that He could not be assimilated to man in sinful flesh. Others see man so utterly lost in sin, and that Christ was so infinitely holy, and perfectly righteous, that He could not become one with man in sinful flesh, except as an expiatory substitute. But man must die: yea, that He must die the atoning death of the cross, that through that death and resurrection man might be made one with Him in that resurrection state, where sin and death are known no more. In plain words, Christ could not be made one with us in sinful humanity, but we, after His death and resurrection, by the Spirit, are made one with Him who was in sinless humanity. Oh! the depths of the riches and wisdom of God. How much better are God's ways than man's poor thoughts!

Now, if we look at the figure, we shall see how beautifully all this truth is shadowed forth. God did not impute the righteousness of Noah to the old world, to men in the flesh. The end of all flesh was come. God had no purpose of saving it, but of destroying it. The terrible waters of judgment roared over the earth. But those very waters of death that destroyed all beneath them, bore in safety on their bosom this representative man, and those that were saved with him; only we must bear in mind that this is a figure of death and resurrection. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer

of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Peter iii. 21, 22.) In this scripture, the deluge and baptism are put side by side, as like figures; both showing that true salvation is on the principle of death to the flesh, and new position and life, in resurrection. Noah was taken from among the dead and placed on Ararat: Christ was taken from among the dead and is gone into heaven. All perished outside the ark: all must perish outside Christ. It did not matter how near a person was to the ark, he was either shut in or shut out. He might have helped to fell the trees or even build the ark, but when once the door was shut he was shut out. It was in vain to cry, Noah! Noah! open unto us. We know it will shortly be so again. The door will soon be shut. No matter how near you may be, 'almost in' will not do. Do not say, I am almost a Christian, and therefore I hope to be saved. You may be a Sunday-school teacher, ah, a preacher, but has God shut you in the only ark of safety? It says, "And the Lord shut him in." The Lord never needs to do His work twice. When Noah was once shut in, he was as safe as at the moment when he stepped out on Mount Ararat. If in Christ you cannot be lost; if out of Him when the door is shut you cannot be saved. There was no salvation outside this resurrection ark. There is no salvation outside the risen Christ. If

Christ be not risen, our preaching is utterly false and vain. If the ark had not risen and floated above the waters, it would have been of no use whatever—it would (if it had remained under the waters) have been a huge coffin. Now, our blessed Jesus did sink down to the lowest depths, He died the Just for the unjust. The dark waters of judgment passed over His soul. He died for our sins and was buried. But if He had remained under death, then all would have died with Him and perished for ever; His death would have been in vain, of no use, like the ark sunk beneath the waters of the deluge. But He rose again for our justification; and thus the ark floating in safety to Ararat is a true figure of the risen Christ.

Now we find, I repeat, God did not propose to save man in the flesh. All that breathed in the old world were destroyed, and Noah only remained, and those who were with him in the ark. Is not this exactly what baptism teaches? Why is the believer baptized? Is it not to show, that as a man in the flesh he is now dead, and therefore buried in water; and henceforth not to reckon himself any more alive in the flesh, but dead. True, if this were all there would be no use in it; but he is also risen with Christ. The believer's old world has perished beneath the waters of judgment, and his new world has begun on his heavenly Ararat. Nothing could be more clear than the harmony of the two figures—baptism and the deluge.

The old world perished. The new world began where the ark rested, upon the mountains of Ararat. God did not save the old world by Noah; old things passed away and all became new. It is so in Christ, old things passed away, and all things became new; and all things of God. Only let us not overlook one divine contrast. Failure soon came in with Noah, the head of his new world. There can be no failure in Christ, the Head of the new creation.

Now as to these questions of resurrection, righteousness, and life. Looking at the ark as a figure, when may we say that the new world commenced? And where would you say was the fountain head, so to speak, of the Noahic new world? Plainly, the new world did not commence until judgment was executed on the old, and the spring head or starting place was Ararat. This is the great question, I repeat: When did the new creation commence, and where is the fountain-head of righteousness and life? The New Testament makes it as clear to my soul that this was and could only be when God raised Christ from the dead, as the Old Testament makes it clear that Noah's world began when God raised him from the dead above the waters of the flood. I do not doubt the sons of Noah were *safe*, resting in the word of God before this. But they were *saved* when the ark rested on Ararat. Neither can I doubt for a moment that all believers before the death and resurrection of Christ were *safe*,

resting in the promise of God. But I could not say they were *saved* until Christ arose from the dead. Though Elijah had long been safe in heaven, yet he was as really saved on the cross as the dying thief, and Christ as truly rose for his justification as mine. All God's salvation, past, present, and to come, is through the death and resurrection of Christ. The Holy Ghost could not be given, and could not say to any, before the death of Christ, "By grace ye are *saved*." Is it not through the exceeding greatness of the power of God in raising Christ from the dead—Head over all to the Church—and having *now* raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? I say, is it not on this very account that the Holy Ghost can now say, "By grace ye are saved?" (Eph. i., ii.) All this is now said of every believer, of all in Christ Jesus. But could it have been said of one single believer before? Impossible! It is of little avail, for those who are ignorant, to ridicule or oppose these things as new and dangerous notions. Let such be ignorant still. But if the reader is a child of God and bows to the word of God, let him search it, and he will find that this is the very truth once delivered to the saints.

Surely the type is not more clear than the antitype. If Noah's world began when the old world was destroyed, so the new creation began when God raised Christ from the dead. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn

from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Col. i. 18.) I say, it is of the first importance to see that Christ is the beginning of the new creation, as raised from the dead. If we suppose that the new creation began by the incarnation or life of Christ in human flesh, or the righteousness of Christ under law—if this is our Christianity, it then presumes that the end of all flesh is not come. That man is still under probation or trial. If under law in the flesh, he must be still on trial. But all this is utterly contrary both to our figure and the plainest teaching of the Epistles. Indeed if this were true, it would be no *new* creation at all, but simply man perfected in Judaism. As we have seen, Christ ever taught His disciples that He must die and rise again; that nothing else was of the least use. The apostle tells us that all are dead, that the trial of man in the flesh by law is utterly abolished, that all are guilty and under judgment, that we now know no man after the flesh—no, not even Christ after the flesh. No doubt we had known Him perfect in the flesh. But it is not after that manner we know Him as the salvation of God, but in resurrection; so that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. "Old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new, and all of God." In proof of all this read, as a little child, Romans i.—viii. and 2 Cor. iii., v. In Noah then, as a figure, we see resurrection from among the dead. And thus through Jesus is preached the resurrection from

[among] the dead. The Jews could have done with Jesus as a king to adorn their system. Men now can do with Him to improve or make up for man in the flesh. But to see the world, and to see man as God sees him in the flesh; to see that man is just what he was in the days of Noah; and to say what God says about all this, that all is about to be destroyed, that God is now taking out as He did with Noah, an elect family in Christ from among this dead world; and linking them with that Christ in heaven, and that all else, however religious, and fair, and mighty in the world will be destroyed—ah! there is no wonder that this truth is so distasteful and stirs up so much wrath and enmity—what good would all the man-mending religion of this day have done in the days of Noah? And what will it do in this? The end of all flesh is come.

Nothing, then, can be more certain than this, that the new creation began when God raised Christ from among the dead—“the firstborn among many brethren”—that thus Christianity is altogether of resurrection.

Our next inquiry then is, Where is the fountain-head of righteousness and of life? In the figure, the fountain-head of this new race was certainly in the person of Noah, on Ararat. In like manner, the fountain-head of the new creation is in the person of Christ, gone into the heavens. We thus, in this figure, hear, as it were, these words addressed by our God and Father to the adorable Son in the highest

heavens, "Come thou and all thy house;" not, surely, into an ark of gopher wood, but into the highest heavens of glory; "for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Yes, all believers are thus made accepted in the Beloved—meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh, the blessed welcome! Come thou and all thy house. Gaze up into the highest heavens and see the glory of God in the face of our true Noah, the man Christ Jesus—the righteous One. **THERE He is, the fountain-head of righteousness and life.**

If we turn to Romans v. we there find two fountains—the fountain-head of sin and death in Adam, the fountain-head of righteousness and life in Christ. As by one offence the stream of sin, and death, and condemnation flowed forth toward all men; so by one righteousness, the stream of righteousness and life flowed forth toward all. The whole of Adam's race thus are under death and condemnation; the whole of the new race have righteousness and life. But it may be asked, Is not that the righteousness of Christ under the law, imputed to us who are still under law? The very word used in verse 18 makes this impossible. The Greek word translated 'righteousness' in this instance, means, 'righteousness accomplished.' Now, righteousness could never be said to be accomplished, completed, until the righteous One had died on the cross and risen again. Then the one righteousness was accomplished, and the righte-

ous One seated in the heavens became the fountain-head of righteousness and life; so that just as Noah's sons were accepted with righteous Noah, so are we accepted in the righteous One on high. The righteousness of Noah was not imputed to men under any of the institutions of the old world; neither is the righteousness of Christ imputed to men under the ordinances or institutions of the flesh under law. The institutions of the old world were buried beneath the flood. The ordinances of the flesh under law were nailed to the cross. Before righteousness was accomplished it was imputed. Faith believed the promise of God, and this was reckoned for righteousness. The apostle cites David and Abraham in proof. This is true of believers now, but much more than this is also true; and hence to speak of the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us as righteousness was imputed to Abraham, is far short of the whole truth. "For as by one man's disobedience many were MADE sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be MADE righteous." We shall be as wholly constituted, or made righteous, as we have been, by Adam's sin, made or constituted sinners. Nay, the very purpose of God in the death of Jesus, was that we might be "MADE the righteousness of God in him." In one sense, righteousness is imputed to us; that is, we are *reckoned* righteous, because our resurrection is not yet actually accomplished. But, then, it is not the unfinished righteousness of Christ on

earth, in the flesh; but righteousness as now finished, accomplished, and subsisting in the Person of our representative in the heavens. We are reckoned dead with Him, risen with Him, one with Him, like the sons of Noah in the ark. In a little while *we shall be made righteous*, for we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him and with Him for ever.

He was ever the righteous One, but He had to die the death of the cross to accomplish that one righteousness in which we stand justified from all things. And now He has accomplished that righteousness, even so as to manifest the righteousness of God in saving lost sinners. God has now said, "Come thou and all thy house (into the highest heavens), for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."

If He is thus, in resurrection, the fountain-head of righteousness, He is also the fount of risen life. In the ark was life: under the ark all was death. Christ is our life: out of Christ all is death. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Now, why had Jesus remained away from this much-loved family until Lazarus was dead? and why does He connect resurrection with life in these striking words? He was the eternal life. In Him was life. But He had not that life to infuse into man in the flesh, to cure man, so to speak. This would have been to set aside

the righteous sentence of God on sin. He could not become one with man in that state. He must die, or remain alone. But if He die, He must then bring forth much fruit in resurrection. Therefore He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." In resurrection, those taken from among the dead are made one with Him. He can give them a new life, new to them, and that after, yea, on the very ground of, the righteousness of God having been accomplished. The whole question of man's guilt, and judgment, and God's righteousness was divinely and for ever settled, so that the believer can look upon himself, as to the sinful flesh, with all its lusts and sins, as truly judged on the cross, as the old world was judged beneath the flood. But now, as really one with Him who is the "I AM, the resurrection and the life," and as passed from the old world of sin and death, as the sons of Noah had passed from the old to the new in the ark with Noah. Yes, I look at that risen One in glory and say--there is the fount; yea, there is my righteousness and life. He is my life, He is my righteousness. Now, I ask, Is this denying the righteousness of Christ? Ah, I fear that some of those who thus charge us, know that they are bearing false witness. As a lady said the other day to a christian friend of mine, "Ah, you all deny the righteousness of Christ." "Stay, stay," said my friend, "if you really think so, how is it that you can shake hands with us; is this all you care for your Lord?" No, if we denied

the spotless righteousness of our adorable Jesus, we could not be Christians. We, as I said at first, hold the spotless and perfect righteousness of His holy person to be so pure, that he could not be assimilated or become one with man in sinful flesh ; but that he must first as our substitute, in the likeness of sinful flesh, by a sacrifice for sin, condemn sin in the flesh. And we hold, that righteousness had to be accomplished by the death of the cross, before man could be identified with Him, and thus made righteous in Him and partaker of His risen life.

Blessed be God, all this has been done. It is finished. And now let me ask the reader, have you this life? Are you in this ark? All that have not this life, must perish beneath the everlasting wrath of God. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." And if you have this life, it is eternal life. All the waters of the flood could not wash away one sin. The sentence on sin is death, and nothing can avert that sentence. Every other refuge but the ark, was swept away. It will be so again; every costly refuge that man is now building, will be burnt up. What a picture of man's folly does the deluge present. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world, and missed a place in the ark? And is it not precisely the same in this day? What are the world's honours, riches, or pleasures; its politics and ambition? Now what fools we are to be occupied with these things; what can

they profit in that hour, when it shall be as it was in the days of Noah? Do not turn a deaf ear to the words of Christ. It shall surely be as it was in the days of Noah? Blessed be God the door is not yet shut, you are not yet shut out; may God bring you, my beloved reader, and shut you in; and if shut in once, all is safe. Even in this there is a beautiful parallel in the two figures: the door was only shut once, and there is one baptism. Under law there were many baptisms, because its sacrifices could never take away sins, and its washings could never make perfectly clean. But now all is perfect. A perfect Saviour, a perfect sacrifice. All who are once sanctified by it, are for ever made perfect. One sacrifice, one baptism, once dead and risen with Christ, for ever risen. The new nature can never die, can never perish. "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" The one baptism is therefore a figure of perfect and everlasting salvation. If once passed from death unto life, like the sons of Noah; once dead with Christ, once alive with Him in resurrection, then saved for ever. It is not the washings of the flesh, like the many baptisms of the law. We are not saved by the mere water in any form. But "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Peter iii. 21.)

Now whilst it could not be that His righteousness

should be imputed to us in sinful flesh, He could not be one with us in this sinful nature, yet it is most certain, if we have passed from death unto life, we are now made one with Him in resurrection, like Noah on Ararat. "And he (Christ) is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." "And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," &c. (Eph. ii. 4, 6.) Nothing could be more strikingly a figure of all this, than the raising up of Noah and his sons from among the dead old world. Let us not, then, think of taking Christ back with us into that old nature of sin and death, but reckon ourselves dead and risen with Him; and thus by the Spirit united to Christ, the Head, we form the spiritual or mystic body of the Christ. Now, if we are thus one with Him in the heavens, "There is one body." "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "There can, therefore, be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." What a blessed place of perfect safety. Now as one with Him on the heavenly Ararat, we are in that new state, and have that new life derived from Him our head. Really have that

new-creation existence before our God and Father, which He must in faithfulness to Christ justify, and cannot possibly condemn.

I do not merely hint at a positive state of righteousness: but I most fully declare it. We shall as really be righteous throughout a bright, everlasting day, as risen in and one with Christ, as we have been really sinners, during the little moment we were the children of Adam. We have this righteous standing now in Christ our risen head. He is now our righteousness, and as our glorified representative, the pledge and certainty that we shall be raised from the dead, even as to the body, and made like Him. All this is not imputed to us on the principle of promise merely, but now made ours, because all has been accomplished in his death and resurrection.

And surely nothing could be more practical than this our calling—as dead and risen with Christ. We are called to give up the old world with its lusts, its pride, and its false pleasures, as the sons of Noah gave up the old world at the flood; and like them with Noah in the new world, so “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Oh “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. If by any

means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Thus the Scriptures teem with proofs that as there was no salvation in the days of Noah, but by being raised from among the dead in the ark, so there is no salvation now, but by being made one with Christ raised from among the dead. And thus are we saved, justified, and glorified. And thus are we called to walk as those who are alive from among the dead.

C. S.



RITUALISM:

AND

WHAT WILL BE THE END OF IT?



LONDON:

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RITUALISM:

AND WHAT WILL BE THE END OF IT?

“AND as Jesus entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.” Luke xvii.

There has been much said of late on the subject of Ritualism, but I have not yet seen it brought to, and fairly examined by, the word of God, in the presence of Him who is the light. This I desire to do; and so far as God by His Spirit shall guide me in His word, I hope to declare, unflinchingly, the counsel of God on this subject.

The Scripture before us throws great light on Ritualism. Let us examine it. In a certain village there were ten lepers. And into that village Jesus enters. Here is man suffering from that loathsome disease which, above all others, is a picture of his horrible state through sin. Into this scene Jesus enters. And man, the leper, stands face to face before Jesus, the Saviour. Have you, my reader, ever thus stood face to face before this

same Jesus? I say, Jesus comes into this scene. Jesus thus meets man in his wretchedness. What a strange cry the presence of Jesus called forth from these poor lepers! "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Surely this is the proper language of man as a sinner. And He who alone could heal the leper, can meet and cleanse the sinner. These ten lepers knew their need. May I ask, Have you ever known your deep need of the cleansing blood of Jesus?

But what a strange answer Jesus gives them: "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." Marvellous words! As though He had said, Go to the Levitical ritualism. I suppose you remember, my reader, that that ritualism was not yet abolished—the work was not yet finished—the one sacrifice was not yet offered—the veil was not yet rent. If you turn to the Levitical ritualism (Lev. xiv.), the first thing you learn is, that it was of no use for the leper to shew himself to the priest except he was healed. Very beautifully is the principle of faith brought out here then: "Go shew yourselves to the priests." Unbelief might have said, nay, would have said, "But we do not feel any better." To look at themselves, how could they go? They heard and believed the words of Jesus. Have you thus heard and thus believed? Or are you saying, I must feel better first? "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

"And it came to pass, as they went they were cleansed." Yes, they felt better, not before, but after they believed: *they were cleansed*. This was a reality, a certainty. This is the simple, naked principle of faith. In Jesus they had found the substance of which the ritualism of Leviticus xiv. was but a series of shadows. Very striking were

these ancient shadows. Viewing the poor leper as a type of the sinner, then these shadows set forth the varied aspects of the offering and resurrection of Christ. Indeed it is full of Christ. It was then God's ritualism. Each rite pointing to Christ. The law of the leper could not heal the leper. Oh! no, when compared with our precious Christ, these were mere beggarly elements. But when he was healed, then the priest took two birds, *alive* and clean. And by these two birds was shadowed forth the only way by which a sinner can be cleansed.

One bird was killed. Yes, for Jesus must needs suffer atoning death. "He was delivered for our offences." But for this death, faith would have nothing to rest in. Then the other bird was dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed. Seven times is this blood sprinkled on him that is to be cleansed. The priest pronounces him clean; and then lets the living bird fly into the open air. This living bird was God's pronouncement that the leper was clean.

"And was raised again for our justification." If the poor leper believed God's pronouncement, he knew for certain, that as sure as the live bird was let loose, so surely he was clean. And if you, my reader, believe God, who raised up Jesus from among the dead, who was thus delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, then, like the cleansed leper, you know with certainty that as surely as Jesus is raised from the dead, so surely are you justified. And in Him you are clean every whit. This you may find fully proved in Romans iv. and v. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is God's pronouncement that the believer is justified. And believing God, his sins are forgiven; sin is not reckoned; righteous-

ness is reckoned. Oh! what peace toward God this gives!

The apostle says, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now if the leper knew he was clean when the priest said so, may not the believer know that he is justified when God says so? Surely the resurrection of Jesus is a brighter proof than the letting loose of the little bird. Just think these three things over again. Sins forgiven—sin not reckoned—righteousness reckoned. Justified from sins by the blood of Jesus; justified from sin; reckoned dead with Him. Reckoned righteous, or justified in Him risen: all of Adam passed away, all now accomplished righteousness in the risen Christ. And to the believer this is most true on the principle of naked faith in the word of God.

Deeply interesting are the truths shadowed forth in Leviticus xiv. Everything of mere nature cut off—the hair and the beard. The washings and the offerings, all of which point to Christ, and all tell out in softest harmonies the perfection of His one offering. I do love to think, that, as the once wretched leper and "those things" were presented before the Lord, so I, by nature a sinful leper, am now presented in all the perfections of Christ, through the value of His blood, in all the sweet savour of His holy person. Oh! my God and Father, am I thus for ever presented, for ever perfected in Him? I bow, I own the riches of thy grace, the depths of thy mercy.

And now, if we trace this wondrous lesson a little farther, we find the once wretched leper anointed with oil. The blood of the trespass-offering is put upon the tip of his right ear, the thumb of his right hand, the great toe of his right

foot, and the oil, sprinkled seven times before **the** Lord, is put upon the blood, "and poured upon his head." Oh! how blessedly this tells out the perfect value of the blood of Jesus! It makes the once guilty sinner a perfected worshipper. And where the blood is seen, the Holy Ghost is given as an ever abiding witness of the value of that precious blood. Very fully is this seen in Hebrews x.

But let us return to our ten lepers. They believed the word of Jesus, and as they went *they were cleansed*. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, *turned back*. Just now there were ten faces on ritualism, and ten backs on Christ; now one turns his back on ritualism and his face on Christ. And whilst these nine are ritualists, this one becomes a worshipper. I am not speaking of man's ritualism, towards which nine out of every ten faces seem turned in this day; but of God's own ritualism, given expressly by Himself until Christ the Substance came. And this I learn, that when this poor leper knew Jesus to be the living God, he could not have his face to Jesus without turning his back on ritualism.

Which way do you stand, my reader? Is your face toward ritualism?—then your back is on Christ. If your face is toward Christ, then your back is on ritualism.

But this one knew he was healed. He did not hope so. If he had, he had better have gone with the nine to see the bird let loose. "With a loud voice he glorified God, and fell down on his face, giving thanks."

It was quite right for a leper in his wretchedness to cry, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon me." Would it be right now that Jesus had had mercy? Would this have been worship, to have

kept saying, "Jesus, have mercy upon me, a miserable leper?" You know it would have been insult, and mockery, and unbelief. And let us carefully note how welcome this worshipper was to Jesus. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

Now I believe the root of ritualism is that unbelief which doubts the reality of the grace of God, in the work of Christ; and the certain remedy against it is that simple faith that, knowing I am cleansed, gives glory to God.

The Samaritan leper knew he was cleansed, then why should he go to ritualism to be cleansed? He knew that Jesus had in richest mercy healed him, then why should he cry any more, Jesus, Master, have mercy upon me? Then what gives glory to God from one who is cleansed? Adoring thanksgiving!

Let us, then, apply this to the sinner's salvation; and the real source of ritualism will be as clear as noon-day.

Let us take a believer, who knows that Jesus *has* met *all* his need as a sinner on the cross; that God *has* thus shewn him the deepest mercy; that he *is* sanctified by the offering of Christ: not only cleansed, but *for ever* perfected. And if he believes Hebrews x. he must know all this. Now does it become him to approach God as a miserable sinner, ever crying for mercy to God; as if he doubted every word that God has spoken? Yea, it is a very solemn thing to say, but it does seem to me that to act in this way of unbelief, is really to deny that Jesus has come in the flesh, and finished the work of redemption. It is quite true if you

do not believe God, and if you are not therefore cleansed; if you do not believe that God has shewn mercy, love, and rightcousness, in the gift of Jesus; if you can deliberately say that God's testimony to the blood of Jesus is not enough to give the certainty of peace. Very well, then you are quite consistent in still crying for mercy, and in turning your back on Christ, and your face on ritualism.

But I think I hear my reader say, "My dear sir, you are forgetting that thousands of real Christians are taught to express their humble doubts, by taking the position of the sinner, ever crying for mercy." I beg your pardon, I do not forget this: but I believe that this very thing is the reason why so many are taken up with ritualism. Let me ask you: If you are cleansed, can anything be more dishonouring to Christ than to doubt it? And can anything be more pleasing to Him, than to fall at His feet a happy worshipper, giving Him thanks? I will grow a little bolder, and say, that no person who *knows*, on the testimony of *God's word*, that he has redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Jesus, can possibly be taken up with ritualism.

Surely this must be a solemn question, for all who love the truth of the believer's complete justification in the risen Christ. Many have thus been blest: were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? May our blessed God turn your face to Christ, and your back on everything else.

The nine lepers had their backs on Jesus, and their faces toward the ritualism of Jerusalem. The ritualist now stands with his back on Christ and his face, where? Is it not on the ritualism of Rome? And what is the ritualism of Rome? Is it not a system of rites and ordinances of men, all

based on the supposition, that the believer is not cleansed from all sins? that the one sacrifice of Christ once offered is not perfect, and is not everlasting in its efficacy? that there needs repetition of sacrifice, like the imperfect sacrifices of the law? that all believers have not boldness to enter into the presence of God, as holy worshippers? nay, that the blood of Jesus is of so little value, that those who do believe will have to be burnt in purgatory, &c.? I am no controversialist, but can any one shew me that this unbelief, and turning the back on Christ, is not the very foundation of Romish ritualism? If by one sacrifice I am for ever perfected, what need have I of either the sacrifice of the mass or purgatory?

If you look in Colossians ii., you will find that this completeness in Christ is the grand reason why we are forbidden to have anything to say to ritualism. The ritualist is very consistent; he does not believe in this completeness in Christ; and therefore he turns his face to ritualism. The believer is shewn to be complete in Him. Buried with Him; risen with Him. All trespasses forgiven. And it is this being dead and risen with Him that constitutes our completeness in Him. "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."

Now just as faith produces obedience, so unbelief always leads to disobedience. The ritualist does not believe in this completeness in Christ

risen ; he therefore disobeys with all his heart these plain commands of scripture. He says, I will be subject to ordinances—I will touch, I will taste, I will handle—I will walk after the commandments and doctrines of men. His whole system is will-worship. Thus unbelief produces a harvest of disobedience to God. Thus is his back on Christ and his face on ritualism. O how sweet the contrast to the Christian ! “ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God,” &c.

The one leper knew he was cleansed, then why still pray for mercy and cleansing? Much more, why should he go back to the rites of Leviticus to get cleansing when now he knew that he was cleansed? The believer can give thanks, like the one leper, with a loud voice, as it is written, “ Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light : who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son ; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col. i.) Is this the thanksgiving of your soul, my reader? Do you thus believe that the redemption *you have*, is absolutely perfect, and makes you fit for the inheritance in light? I say again, the whole question turns on faith or unbelief. Perhaps you say, “ If this is the case, turning the back on Christ in unbelief, and going back to ritualism is a very serious matter : what will be the end of it?” Yes, that is just what I want to enquire into :

WHAT WILL BE THE END OF IT?

That question will be answered if we examine a parallel case in Hebrews x.

The whole of this epistle is occupied with the ritualism of the law: each part is contrasted with the person and work of Christ. And we are distinctly told in chapter ix., the Holy Ghost signified by that ritualism, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest: that these were only carnal rites or ordinances imposed until Christ. Then in chapter x. the sacrifices of that ritual are shewn to make nothing perfect or complete. But the one sacrifice of Christ makes all who are sanctified by it for ever perfect or complete. Now God bears witness to this perfection in two ways.

There is one who bears witness in heaven: Jesus Himself, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Then there is another on earth: the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.

Do you believe this double witness of God? He has taken up the Holy One who died for our sins. Raised for our righteousness or justification, He sits in peaceful proof that the atoning work is done. The Holy Ghost too has been sent down, abiding witness of the perfect place into which we are brought by the blood of Jesus. God says to every believer, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." If I am not a believer, I say; if I have not faith; then I can only stand at a distance, crying for mercy, and hoping to be saved. Sad, sad it is, if the Christian is put by man into that false place.

This is the true place which the Holy Ghost gives to every believer: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." This is Christianity, as of God, in contrast with the shadows of ritualism, which could not remove the veil that shut out man from God.

Very simple this, but do you believe it? Can you say, By the blood of Jesus I have now boldness within the veil? Can you say, that having such a high priest, as a purged worshipper I need no other? If you cannot, you do not believe in the blood of Jesus, and you do not believe in the priesthood of Christ. All turns, you observe, on this point; if you believe God, the blood of Jesus gives you boldness in the holiest, for His word says so, and you need no other intercessor, for He ever liveth to make intercession for you.

Oh! where are you? Can you fall like the one leper at the feet of this holy Jesus, giving Him thanks for thus cleansing and fitting you for the holiest? Or is your back on Him, and your face on ritualism? If so, this brings us to the solemn question, What will be the end of it? Will you read verse 26? "For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." But, you say, you surely would not apply that to the ritualist! Where is the difference? The Holy Ghost plainly applies this to the Jew who had heard and professed Christianity. To go back to the ritualism of the law, was to sin wilfully. God speaks of such, as having trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace.

Now I do believe that this is also the truest possible description of the ritualist of this day—yes, every line of it. The sinning wilfully is what marks its contrast with dark Rome. For the poor Romanist is brought up in total ignorance of Christianity, as described in this chapter of

Hebrews. And in the midst of his intercessors and masses and purgatory, he knows no present way into the holiest, but sighs in uncertainty, and, unless God in His mercy prevent, dies in despair. Not so our ritualist of the Reformation. The glorious sound of justification by faith has rung in his ears. And it is not a little remarkable that at the very time that the gospel of God's righteousness is being proclaimed far and near, the ritualist wilfully rejects it all, and acts over again the Jew of old who draws back to perdition.

I think this paper is being read by a young person, who is attracted by the outward show of ritualism. Mark well, all this is of man's will, will-worship. It is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof is judgment and fiery indignation. In the midst of so much light, and to go back to rites, and shadows; if this is not sinning wilfully, what possibly can be?

“He that despised Moses' law died without mercy.” And will you despise the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the blood of Jesus? Will you deny that the just One has died for the unjust to bring us to God? Christianity is the blessed fact that by this death, this one sacrifice, the believer's sins are forgiven, never to be remembered against him; that he is now, like the leper, a cleansed worshipper in the presence of God, *needing no rites or ceremonies, to bring him there.* O my reader, is this now your happy position? or do you doubt it, and in practice deny it? If you cling to shadows, your back is on Christ the substance; and you deny the efficacy of the blood of Christ. The Samaritan leper alone gave glory to God. The happy believer who takes this place, as a cleansed worshipper, alone gives glory to God.

But it may be said, are there not crowds

drawing back to ritualism and to Rome? Is there not less and less of worship in spirit; and more and more of outward show; each of the so-called reformed churches, pleasing the world, with gothic buildings, and what attracts the natural taste of man? I own the full sad truth of this. And let me ask you; If the despising of the finished work of Christ, and the blessed place of a cleansed worshipper by His blood, brought down the judgments of God on the Jews of old, what may we expect, now England is doing the very same thing? I do solemnly believe that England and Christendom are on the eve of being given up to the strong delusions foretold in 2 Thessalonians ii. Yes, the multitude, who are rejecting the truth of God wilfully, and going back to ritualism, may with certainty look for the judgment, and fiery indignation of God. There is much more hope of a dark Romanist who has never known the truth, than of those who have known it and now deny it, and go back to ritualism. It is the most dreadful position that a soul can be found in. Allured to perdition, by sacred song, and everything that can fascinate the natural mind. Such is Satan's great success of the day. Do you say, I speak strongly, where is my proof? The proof is plain enough. If you reject the efficacy of the one sacrifice that is for ever perfect, then there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins. You must be eternally lost. But if you believe and rest in the efficacy of that blood, and thus know that you are for ever perfected, then you cannot be a ritualist. The two things are as opposite as light and darkness. In a word, you cannot have your face on Christ, with the certainty that you are cleansed, without turning your back on ritualism.

I confess I have little hope for those who have

thus deliberately trodden under foot the Son of God. But to the wavering, the perplexed, the tempted; may God in His mercy stop you, awaken, and save you. Oh! to meet God now as the lepers met Jesus: to hear His word—to believe it! Are you yet a sinner? Then “Be it known unto you . . . that through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him ALL that believe are justified from all things.” O the mighty principle of this simple, naked faith! God sets before you the death of Jesus for sins; the resurrection, or Jesus risen, for justification. All, all the sinner needs is thus set forth in Jesus. God proclaims sweet pardon to you through this same Jesus. Do you believe God? The leper did not say, That is too easy—I must *do*, *do*, *DO*, first. No. And he did not say, I must *FEEL*, *FEEL* better. Do you say so? He did not say, No man can tell whether he is cleansed or not—did he? Do you say so? He knew it, he turned his back on ritualism. Do you, as a believer, know that you are justified? If you do believe God, then you must know you are justified, because He says so—does He not? Would you say, No man knows whether God speaks truth or not? May God give you that faith in Him that will enable you just now to turn your back on ritualism and your face on Christ—knowing that you are cleansed in His precious blood. May you thus give glory to God with a loud voice! And to the God of all grace be everlasting praise.

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(READ 2 CHRON. III. TO IV. 5.)

It would require a large volume to trace fully the glory of Christ as shadowed in this portion of the word. My desire, in this short paper, is to help you with a few thoughts to the closer study of the word of God.

I hope you will not think that I am about to give any supposed authority, from Solomon's temple, for the building of so-called christian places of worship. The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost should come, and guide the disciples into all truth. The Holy Ghost did come, and did guide the apostles and the early Church into all truth : and is it not most clear, from the Acts and the Epistles, that the Holy Ghost did not, after He came, guide the Church to build any places of worship on earth? No, not one. The christian worship is purely spiritual. Wherever believers were found on earth, in spirit they entered heaven itself with their great High Priest, and worshipped in the holiest.

The New Testament scriptures, however, clearly recognize a spiritual building—and of which Solomon's temple, I do not doubt, will be found to be in some interesting particulars a type.

The Epistle to the Ephesians especially describes this risen, heavenly, spiritual building. Believers

“are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Eph. ii. 20—22.) What a building! and what a builder! “Ye are God’s building.” (See 1 Cor. ii. 8—11.) With these, and many other passages of the word describing the spiritual building, let us now turn to Solomon’s temple for instruction.

And first, the materials of which the temple was built. Great stones and lofty trees. God is pleased thus to picture the two conditions of those whom He brings, and builds, in Christ the heavenly temple. Man is a great sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, and yet he is a lofty pharisee.

In a former tract, “**GREAT STONES AND COSTLY,**” I have dwelt a little on the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward, in the raising from the dead the Lord Jesus—the chief corner-stone—and in raising us up, though dead sinners, in Him. Let us now see the way in which the lofty trees of Lebanon were brought to the temple at Jerusalem.

Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, “Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon: (for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon;) and, behold, my servants shall be with thy servants, even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great.” (Chap. ii. 8, 9.) Hiram replied, “We will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in flotes by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.” (Chap. ii. 16.)

Thus there was only one way for every tree used

in building the temple. The axe, the axe; stroke after stroke, until the lofty tree lies flat and dead, severed from every root of nature. And then down, down, down the slopes of Lebanon, right down into the water. It must go into the water at the foot of Lebanon before it can be taken out of the water at Joppa—and it must be put into the water, and taken out of the water, before it can be carried up to Jerusalem's temple. There was no overland route for a single tree.

The axe, the fall, down into the water, symbol of death: out of death into the temple. Could there be a more concise, or striking picture of God's way of bringing man to Himself?

Let us compare it with one or two examples. Now Saul of Tarsus was not only a great sinner—he says, “the chief of sinners”—but he was also the most lofty pharisee that ever waved his head on the moral Lebanon of man. He was a cedar tree of the cedar trees; a fir tree of the fir trees; “a Hebrew of the Hebrews”—never was there a straighter moral fir tree, or more lofty religious cedar. But when the word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, entered his soul, yes, when Jesus said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” the lofty cedar fell flat on the ground. Then did he find that even his religious zeal was his greatest wickedness. What a felling! What a severing from every fancied root of goodness, from every trust in himself, as a natural man! All had to become dross and dung. Down, down, down, until he is nothing, and Christ is all. Yes, for three days in darkness it was down, down to the water, symbol of death, and the lofty pharisee was buried by baptism into the likeness of the death of Christ.

And as the trees were put in the water at the foot of Lebanon, and raised out at Joppa, so Saul was buried with Christ in death, and the new man Paul was raised out of death, possessed of the new life, even one with the risen Christ.

It was so with the Eunuch. The scripture which he read was opened, and stroke after stroke was given; Jesus, the holy one, must needs die for his sins; He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. "His life is taken away from the earth." Where is man's religiousness? Where his lofty pride—if he is so utterly lost in sin that the Son of God must thus come and suffer for his sins? And He has thus come, and has thus suffered even unto death, forsaken of God. The fine straight worshipper from Jerusalem bows his head; he falls down, down; he justifies God. He says, Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And again, like our trees of Lebanon, they went down into the water, and came up again out of the water. Now if you will read carefully the Acts, you will find this was the only way to the spiritual temple of the Holy Ghost: "Hearing, they believed and were baptized." (Acts xviii. 8.) Do not forget the only way the trees travelled to Jerusalem. Do not mistake; God's only way of bringing you to Himself is through the death and resurrection of Christ. Read very carefully on this Romans vi. 3-11. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his

resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

I grant you it is a hard struggle to give up all pretensions to righteousness; to be crucified with Christ, dead with Him, buried with Him, into His very death. Many Christians struggle desperately to keep a little footing on Lebanon. What a mistake! Now is it not most blessed to see, not only my sins judged on the cross, but all that *I am* condemned once for all on the cross, and buried with the holy Sin-bearer in the grave of His death. Do not you see that *all* that can be condemned has been, and is thus, condemned, so that there is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

We shall have to notice shortly where and how these materials were placed in the temple, but having thus seen the route of the trees of the building, let us next notice the building itself with its wondrous lessons of instruction.

When Solomon began to build, God gave him very exact measurements. “The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits and the breadth twenty cubits. And the porch that was in the front, the length of it was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the

height an hundred and twenty, and he overlaid it within with pure gold." In verse 8, "He made the most holy house: the length whereof was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits; and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents." That is about £3,285,000.

The first point of measurement I notice is this: The length of the porch, or way into the temple, is according to the breadth of the holiest—twenty cubits. The holy house symbolized the presence of God; and the porch, or way into that presence was according to the divine presence itself. Do you see this? A few of the words of the Lord Jesus will make it plain: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him." And again, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." These few words of the Lord Jesus make the matter most clear. The way, or porch, is according to or equal to the holiest. Jesus is the way, and He is equal to the divine presence; for He is God. And he that has seen Jesus, has seen the Father also. God could not have opened a more glorious way to Himself for lost sinners; for the Son of God has died, and risen again, that He may be the way; as it is written, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." (Heb. x. 19.) Not only was the length of the porch equal to the breadth of the holiest; but what a height! what boldness we have in Jesus to enter! Do you

not now see the glory of Jesus shadowed forth as the way to God in this porch? Do you need any other way but Jesus?

Before we go on to the next interesting point in the measurement, we will return, and see where the stones and trees were placed in the temple, and thus learn a little more of the counsels of God as to those that are in the spiritual building.

All, whether stones or trees, were overlaid with pure gold. Jesus alone, the righteous one, the righteousness of God, can be set forth or symbolized by "pure gold;" as Jesus says, "I counsel thee to buy of me pure gold." And not only was every tree and stone overlaid with pure gold, completely covered out of sight—not a notch of the fir being seen—but also there were "graved cherubim on the walls." Believing God, who "raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification," it (that is, righteousness) is reckoned unto us. As the pure gold overlaid or covered the trees and stones, so Jesus has been raised from the dead, to be our ever subsisting righteousness. Not a notch of the old tree was to be seen. God could make no mistake; He raised up the Holy One, who had died for our sins, to be in resurrection our everlasting and subsisting righteousness. As God looked in the temple He saw only the pure gold. Even so in the heavenly building in Christ: "he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

And more: do you ask, But where are the cherubim graved on the pure gold that covers the wall? Look up by faith at Jesus our subsisting righteousness in the presence of God: what are those wounds on that pure and glorified body? do they not answer to the cherubim graved on

the wall? Cherubim in scripture set forth the consuming judgment of God (Ezekiel x.), as seraphim are the burning purification of God (Isaiah vi.), but both taking action from the fire of the altar: the consuming judgment of God against sin as endured by Jesus, Son of God, on the cross. By this is all the believer's sin put away; or by this, according to this, must the rejecter of Christ be for ever under the judgment and wrath of God. The ways of God are equal. He has shewn what His wrath against sin is once on Calvary, and can He shew less wrath to the lost soul, after rejecting pardon, than He shewed His beloved Son when hanging on the accursed tree, the Sin-bearer?

God is just, and the justifier. He who is our everlasting righteousness bears in His own body the marks of the consuming cherubim judgments, once endured for us, on Calvary. This is an all important subject; for the better we know the righteousness of God, the more solid will be our peace.

Just notice, how this truth of cherubim is repeated, and enforced. There is the cherubim graved on the fine gold. He who is our righteousness did first endure the consuming judgment due to sin.

Then "In the most holy house he made two cherubim of image work and overlaid them with gold;" and the utmost care is taken to shew that the span of the cherubim's wings was the exact breadth of the holiest. "The wings of these cherubim spread themselves forth twenty cubits; and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward." Not one cubit short of the breadth of the holiest. Can anything give more solid peace than this: that the consuming judgment of God on sin was according to God's own measure of sin?

Not our thought of sin, not our measure: but according to the divine presence—the twenty cubits of the holiest: twenty cubits, the length of the porch: twenty cubits, the breadth of the holiest: and twenty cubits the span of the cherubim's wings. He who was with God, and was God, He is the way; and He bore the divine judgment, according to what God is.

More: not only were cherubim graved on the wall, and cherubim stretching their wings the full width of the most holy house; but on that veil of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen were wrought cherubim. Nothing short of the divine judgment on sin could open the new way into the holiest; but since Jesus has borne that wrath due to us, sin is now put away, and the veil rent from top to bottom—where man could not by any means be brought, we now have “boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” What a contrast to the Jews' religion of old! No veil with wrought cherubim now, to hide God from man, and keep sinful man from God. The blood has been shed; sin is put away. Divine judgment has been executed; the veil is rent, and by one offering everlasting in its efficacy. How loud those types of old spake out the fact that Jesus must needs suffer the atoning death! And our happy place now, in the presence of God, as loudly proclaims the work is done.

Next, we consider the altar of brass. “Twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof.” (Chap. iv. 1.) Is not this most remarkable? the square of the altar is the exact square of the

holiest. Here are two symbols: the one, the holiest—the presence of God; the other, the altar—the cross of Christ. And the one is equal to the other. The altar is equal to the holiest: the cross of Christ is equal to all the claims of God. Twenty cubits, by twenty, was the measure of the holiest; and twenty cubits, by twenty, the measure of the altar. And did not every victim that was ever offered on that altar point on to Jesus the Lamb of God? Yes, as the body of the beast was consumed on that altar, and the blood poured out at the foot of that altar, even so on the cross the Son of God bore the divine consuming wrath, in that holy body prepared for Him; His own blood too was poured out at the foot of that cross. But the measurement of the altar being equal to the holiest, does not this give us a marvellous knowledge both of what the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, really was; and also *what it must be* to meet the claims of God as to sin and righteousness? I say, *must be*; for note these measurements were given by instruction. “Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed.” The altar must not be one cubit less or more than the holiest.

Does not this direct our thoughts at once to the person of Christ? Could any other being be found equal to God? For the sacrifice can only be what the person is, or the victim offered. If a bullock or a goat be offered, the sacrifice can only be finite, and makes nothing perfect as to sin before God, for God is infinite. In other words, a finite offering cannot meet the claims of the infinite God. If a finite offering could have put away sin, then the altar would not need to have been equal to the holiest. We are shortsighted, we are blind, as men: but is God shortsighted? is God blind?

Can He either under or over estimate anything? How dreadful then is sin, since nothing could put it away from His sight but a sacrifice equal to Himself! The altar must be equal to the holiest.

Let us now solemnly approach this tremendous question, Who is that Holy One, made sin for us, hanging on the forsaken cross, in the midst of that awful darkness? Is He truly man? Yes, truly man; crucified by men, forsaken by God, His soul made an offering for sin. Is He only man? Then His offering can only be finite. Unbelief says, it is so; and hence the need of repeated sacrifices, or continued masses, being offered to God, for the sins, and the souls, of the living and the dead. And all sadly true if He were only man. For if He were only man, then the claims of God have not yet been fully met; and who can tell how much has yet to be added to the one offering of Jesus, before the altar is equal to the holiest? If Jesus is only a man, then work on ye priests—add your thousands of masses—burn fiercely, ye fires of purgatory—and strive hard, ye children of unbelief, to add your merits and attainments to the work of Jesus: for the altar must be equal to the holiest. But, oh, enough!

God did not spare His own Son. (Rom. viii. 32.) “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: . . . unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” (Heb. i.) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with

God. All things were made by him and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth . . . No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John i. 1—18.) "He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins and we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life . . . The Son of God . . . This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John iv., v.) "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. ii. 9.)

Now if any man says he does not own the co-equality of the Eternal Son with the Father, let him honestly say he does not believe the scriptures of truth.

Blessed Jesus, I own thee, though truly man, yet as truly God, over all, blessed for evermore. He that hath seen thee, hath seen the Father also.

Again, I say, How dreadful is sin, when no one in heaven or earth could be found to offer the atoning sacrifice for sin but He, the Son, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, who was with God, and was God.

Let us now again look back at the cross. Who is that Holy One bearing the wrath and consuming judgment due to sin? Is He truly man? Yes, truly man. Is He only a finite man? The Son of

God! who, though equal with God, has humbled Himself in untold love, love to us; humbled Himself to the shameful death of the cross. Is He truly God? Truly God. He who was with God, the real distinct person of the Son, but yet truly the self-existent, "was God." Though thus emptying Himself and humbling Himself unto death, yet the glory of His person is the glory of the cross. The infinite Son of God can only offer an infinite sacrifice. THE ALTAR IS EQUAL TO THE HOLIEST. The claims of God against the sinner must be fully met, by the death of the Son of God, for the sinner. Now do you not see great value in this type, the altar being the exact measure of the holiest? Nothing short of the sacrifice of an infinite Person could meet the claims of the Holy Infinite God—more than such an offering could not be.

And now ponder this well; faith links us with this perfect and infinite Saviour. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is not merely our own thoughts of what we are, but God, who knows all we are from first to last; surely He saw all that could be condemned in us. Now if *His claims* are met on the cross, then most surely *our need* is met. What has met the infinite must meet and cover the poor finite. A close study of Hebrews x. will shew all this to be most true. There we learn that by the will of God all believers are sanctified "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." We also learn that this sacrifice can neither be repeated nor *continued*. For Jesus, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." And, then, how infinite its efficacy

for all believers: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The Holy Ghost is a witness of all this. God in righteousness says, "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." There can be no more offering for sin. Nothing can possibly be added to the infinite. Every mass, or pretended sacrifice, is an insult to God—and every doubt is a dishonour cast on Christ. O let us no longer keep at such an unbelieving distance, but let us enter, let us draw near with the boldness that corresponds to the offering of the body, the blood, the atoning death of Jesus. O! the glory of the cross! The altar is equal to the holiest—the righteousness of God is exalted by the one propitiatory sacrifice, equal to Himself. Can anything, then, destroy the peace which He hath made by His death on the cross?

If we are, then, thus for ever perfected worshippers by the one infinite sacrifice of Christ, what about our failures? What is the provision for these? Does not failure in a believer interrupt his communion with God? Certainly! Then how is this to be met? This brings us to the "molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about." (Chap. iv. 2.) It might be well here to notice, that these chapters shew us more of the counsels of God, as to the glory of Christ, than man's side of the question; or man's approach to God. Indeed, this had been given in the types of Exodus and Leviticus. A little remembrance of these things is, however, necessary. In man's approach to God, the first thing was the altar, setting forth the cross of Christ—atonement having been made on the altar. Then the next thing was the laver,

in which the feet of the priests were to be washed. Then the entrance into the tabernacle.

This is the way now ; first, the altar, the cross of Christ—the blood of Jesus which cleanseth us from all sin. And when the soldier with a spear pierced His side, forthwith came there out blood and water. There is the blood of atonement. And the water, the washing by the word. There is the death of the Just One, by which we have been brought to God. And there is the living priesthood that maintains us in living communion with God.

We have seen the square of the altar, equal to the square of the holiest. The death of the cross has met all the claims of God to the utmost measure. But, then, why was the washing laver, or molten sea, round? You will see if you turn to John xiii. In this chapter the Lord Jesus reveals to us His present priestly service. The atoning work is done. “It is finished.” This priestly work for us is going on. “He took a towel and girded himself, after that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” The molten sea was round, that is, it had neither beginning nor end, so to speak—everlasting as an emblem. And such is the love of our Great High Priest. “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” Love that never ceases to wash our feet, to restore our souls.

But why was the molten sea so much less than the altar? Nothing through eternal ages can compare with the cross of Christ. God only can measure it. He, the infinite, can only fully know that which is infinite; equal to Himself. There is an axiom that holds good here: the greater includes the less; or, as the apostle expresses it, “MUCH

MORE, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, **MUCH MORE** being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. v. 9, 10.) Surely this is unspeakably comforting. If we have been reconciled to God by the greatness, yea, the infinite sacrifice, typified by the altar equal to the holiest, how much more certain that we shall be washed from all daily failure and defilement, as typified by the molten sea. Is it not also true that if he wash us not, we have no part or lot with Him? For if we are His, He cannot fail to wash our feet, to restore the defiled conscience. Everlasting love cannot fail.

Now are we willing to take this low place, and thus give to Jesus all the glory? Do not say, I am perfect in the flesh; He shall never thus wash me from daily failures. And do not say, If I am saved by the infinite death of Christ, I will practise sin, and will not look to Jesus for holiness of life, for cleanness of feet in my daily walk. O remember that he that practises sin is of the devil.

Do you ask, Is this true, that if we are really saved by the death of the cross, it is **MUCH MORE** certain that we shall be saved from all defilement to the end? That is exactly what the Holy Ghost is saying to us in these types, and plain scriptures. Why should you doubt God?

And now look again at this molten sea. Do you see the little oxen cast with the sea, ten in a cubit? And then of course you see those twelve large oxen on which the sea stood. "Three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east." Do you not see

patience and strength typified in the ox? We scarcely know this in England. I remember watching with much interest the patient tread of four large oxen, a little way from Paris, drawing a vessel on a canal. Nothing could illustrate more strikingly patient endurance. And have we not found the most amazing patience in our Great High Priest, mighty to save to the uttermost? And oh how he bears with us!—so unlike our bearing with one another. Surely not to overlook our defilements (suffer not such a thought for a moment); but in mercy and faithfulness to wash our feet.

Why did three of the oxen look every way? North, east, west, south? Ah, not a temptation can come against us but the eye of our patient and mighty watching Jesus sees it and knows it before it comes. As I write these lines, or as you read them, Satan may be plotting, or men may be taking counsel against us; but the eye of Jesus sees it all, whether it may be from north, east, west, or south. He who is gone up on high, still watches His little flock in the desert, His few loved ones in the wind-tossed boat. How comforting this is! however great the trial it cannot surprise our patient deliverer. He saw the temptation coming against Peter, and He saw his fall; yet He says to him, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Now what love this is, is it not? Do you thus know the patient loving heart and watchful eye of Jesus—watching for us every way? We may indeed say, I will not fear what man can do unto me.

Do you say, Well, I mostly look to Him in great trials, to help me in great temptations; but what hinder my soul, and vex it most, are the little worrying trials of life? "The little foxes that spoil

the vines." Have you not noticed also those little oxen? not only the great oxen, looking every way; but the patient, watchful care of our tender High Priest, in His preserving, restoring service, over all or in all the little trials of our wilderness path? yes, even though it be ten in every cubit.

And they were cast, when the molten sea was cast. It is the inseparable part of His blessed work, as He says so sweetly, "I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke xxii. 27.) But let not this precious word be used as a cover for indifference about evil; as if He lovingly allowed the least evil or defilement. Nothing can be more false or dangerous. He does not allow it; but lovingly takes the towel and girds Himself to serve. He pours the water into the basin, not to allow or overlook evil; but to wash it away, to restore our consciences. The Lord grant that we may do the same to one another in the fear and love of the Lord! We thus need, and we thus have, Jesus, in the smallest secret failure, as in the strongest temptation, or gross and open sin. The smallest dot of leprosy must be brought to the priest. It cannot be overlooked, without the gravest danger of public dishonour to Christ. Satan is seeking to set this aside: 'Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing: the Lord overlooks our faults.' And thus the Holy Spirit is grieved. Let us give Jesus His true place in washing our feet. Let us be more real in confessing our sins to Him. God is faithful and just in forgiving our sins, and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

Now do you see why there were large oxen looking every way and little oxen, even "ten in a cubit?" Even thus was the Son of God "made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merci-

ful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God." "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.) The captain of our salvation has trodden the road before us in every step; He is made perfect as our captain through sufferings. "In every point." Therefore He is able to save us from all temptations: be they great, from north, east, west, or south; or be they small, even ten in every cubit of our path.

Do you notice the brim of the molten sea? What are those flowers? Flowers of lilies. It is said in the song of songs, "as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." And again, "he feedeth among the lilies." Does not all this say then, "I must wash your feet, according to what you are in my sight; what I have made you."

There are three things said of Christ. 1st, "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." 2nd, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." 3rd, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 25—27.)

How fair, how spotless white the lilies of Christ! How sweet the perfume of Christ! Surely if we look at our old, condemned, crucified nature, we may well say, Black as the tents of Kedar. And little washing do these black Arab tents get. But it is just as we know ourselves as the lilies of Christ; as we know our acceptance and completeness in Him, that we can say, "without spot," "no condemnation."

If He feedeth amongst His lilies, our feet must

be washed; all defilement must be confessed to Him, and put away, washed by the water of the word—our feet must be washed as becometh His presence; washed according to His thoughts of us, not our thoughts of one another—oh! how little we have of the mind of Christ as to one another! Think of those words, “For ever perfected.” “As he is, so are we in this world.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new, and all things are of God.” “He hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

Now seriously, do you believe that all these statements of God’s word are true of every Christian on earth? that every Christian is a lily of Christ? Are you a believer? Have you passed from death unto life? Then I ask, Are these statements of God to you true or false? Do you say, I thought that such scriptures as these pointed to a higher christian life; a state of perfection to which few, very few, attain? “Attain,” did you say? oh! fearful mistake! Is there one thought of attainment either in these types of the temple or in these plain statements of scripture?

The great stones, that were lifted out of the pit with such strength and power, and were made ready before being brought, and built in the temple; was this their own work? and is it the work of great sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, to raise themselves from the dead? or is this the wondrous work of God? (see Eph. ii.) or did the lofty trees of Lebanon attain to be cut down, to be rolled down the sides of Lebanon into the sea, and again floated to Joppa, and lifted out of the water,

and built in the temple? Was not all this done to them? and the gold that covered them, was this attainment? Did they cover themselves with it? Oh no, the very opposite; the gold was put over them! And when the proud religious pharisee is cut down, and buried in the death of Christ, and raised out of death with Christ, completely and for ever justified in Christ risen; is this attainment? Did not God give His Son to die for our sins? did not He raise Him from the dead, to be our everlasting subsisting righteousness? Now if we believe God, if we believe that all this was of God, and is of God, then where is our foolish notion of attaining to a state of higher perfection than God hath given every believer in Christ?* This does not call in question, but surely demands our entire consecration to God—our practical sanctification, body, soul, and spirit to Him.

Take any one of the above divine statements of the God of all truth. Take this, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus:" surely that well describes a lily of Christ; so heavenly white and pure from sin that there is nothing that the eye of God can detect and condemn. I do not know that I can state the case stronger or clearer: Nothing to condemn in them that are in Christ Jesus. Can this state be a matter of attainment, when our best righteousness is only filthy rags? Yes, and if we say we have no sin we only deceive ourselves and are liars. Did you ever attain, for one hour, to such a state of love to God and man?—to such holiness of

* In Philipians iii. the word "attain" is not exactly correct. Resurrection from among the dead is the one thing aimed at and desired, any way, or at any cost. O for grace to walk according to what we are made to be in Christ!

heart, that there was nothing that the eye of God could detect and condemn? Oh! if man could thus attain to sinless holiness, what need was there that the altar should be equal to the holiest? What need was there for the infinite sacrifice of the cross?

I grant you there is something passing wonderful in this declaration of God: there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." How can this be? How? Blessed be God scripture answers very simply, the altar must be, and was, equal to the holiest. The cross of Christ met all God's claims against me, the sinner. All that the eye of God could detect in me, my sins, and my sin—all, all that I am, as a fallen sinner—*was condemned*, as God saw me; so God gave His Son to be condemned for me. Then if all that could be condemned—sins and self—has been condemned, judged to the uttermost, in Christ, how can there be anything left to condemn? All has been condemned, judged to the death, on the cross!

And more, not only if the old *I* has been thus crucified, beneath the wrath of God—not only has the old man, I say, thus passed away under the divine judgment on sin, in the sin-bearer, whose one sacrifice met all the claims of God—but the new man is wholly of God—the new life is the justified life of the risen Christ—the new nature is the new creation of God; yea, as we have seen, all things have become new, and all of God. New, and of God: can this be condemned? The old has been condemned: the new cannot be condemned. And "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And since all this is of God, how can it be one's attainments?

And now, before we part, do remember this blessed fact, that *every* Christian is a spotless lily of Christ. If not, how could every Christian give thanks, that he is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? (See Col. i. 12—14.)

Let us not say, Unto Him that loved us, and half-washed us from our sins. Shall we not, O reader, can you, say—"Unto him that loved us, and *washed* us from our sins in his own blood?" (Rev. i. 5.) Yes, once a mass of moral corruption, *dead* in sins (and death is corruption), now washed in the blood of the Lamb, a heaven-white lily, having the life and perfume of the risen Christ.

A lily of Christ! what a starting point this is! And what an end, when He who thus loved the Church and gave Himself for it, and has thus sanctified it, in holy separation to God, shall present it to Himself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

The new nature in every believer must and will long to be holy, even as He is holy. The desire will be, that the walk may be in keeping with what we are in His sight. And if we fail, may we go to our Great High Priest, remembering the flowers of lilies in the molten sea.

And when tempted and harassed by the enemy of souls, may we remember that the molten sea was not half the size of the brazen altar. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, **MUCH MORE**, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If thus reconciled by the death of the infinite Son of God offered on the cross, the sacrifice for sins, remember that, on the authority of God's word, your final salvation is thus *much more certain*. Christ is for you in the heavens mighty to save, and the

Holy Ghost is dwelling in you consequent on His work being finished to the glory of God.

Solomon's temple, with its types and shadows, has passed away; but the Church, as the dwelling-place of God, shall not pass away. In those coming bright millennial days, it is seen "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Not one of the great stones, or lofty trees, brought by the Spirit of God, and built into the heavenly temple, can be lost.

Are you saved? Have you been brought to God? Have you passed from death unto life? Has all your religious pride been felled and laid in the dust? Have you been crucified with Christ? Have you been buried with Christ in death? Are you risen with Christ? Is the risen Christ your righteousness, redemption, sanctification, and all? What is the death of Jesus to your soul? Has it glorified God, even about your sins? Do you believe Him to be the Son of God? that His one sacrifice was equal to all the claims of God? Do you believe He is your Great High Priest? Do you need another sacrifice? Do you need another priest?

Oh no! the square of the altar was equal to the square of the holiest! and His priestly loving care knows no end. The brazen sea was round. Unto Jesus, Son of God, be everlasting praise.

C. S.



JONATHAN;

OR,

ONE THING LACKING.

My attention was called at a reading meeting in Gloucestershire, some time ago, to the sad circumstances of the death of Jonathan on Mount Gilboa. Israel fled from before the enemy, and fell. Saul was slain, and his three sons were slain with him. It was the total overthrow of the kingdom of Saul. What a sad picture—the body of Saul and the bodies of his three sons fastened to the walls of Bethshan! Was not this a sad, sad end for any man to come to? But for such a man as Jonathan to come to such a shameful end! How was this? why was this? and what is the lesson that God would have us learn for these last days, in this inspired history?

Perhaps my reader is not very familiar with the inspired record of the life and times of Jonathan. I shall be happy to go over the leading points of this wonderful history; and I may tell you at the outset, that I believe we shall find the story contain some very valuable typical instruction for the present time.

The turning-point in Jonathan's history is in 1 Samuel xviii., and this also illustrates the turning-point in the history of every soul born from above.

True, we find him before this a mighty man of the house of Saul. "He smote the garrison of the Philistines that were in Geba." "And Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear." (1 Samuel xiii. 3.) And again, we find him a valiant man at the pass of Michmash. Ten centuries after these events, another could say, "I was alive without the law once." "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more . . . an Hebrew of the Hebrews."

Now the turning-point in the life of Jonathan was, in type, very much like the turning-point in the life of Paul on his way to Damascus.

The subject opens. What a study! Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah. On the other side of the valley stood the adversary of the house of Saul—the defier of the armies of Israel. And there was no deliverer in the house of Saul. God sent a saviour king that day—that despised shepherd—a stripling. Ah! that despised one is God's anointed king of Israel. The mighty foe was slain that day by the youngest son of Jesse. "And Saul said unto him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David said, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." "And it came to pass when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." (Chap. xviii. 1.) Ah! Jonathan had looked across that valley of Elah, and beheld that terrible adversary, Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span; and Saul and all Israel were dismayed and greatly afraid. Not one day merely, or two, but for forty days, he thus presented himself, and with him all the armies of Philistia. How gracious of God to send to the camp that saviour David, the unknown king. There he stood, having finished the work God gave him to do. Complete was that victory—the champion was dead, and the Philistines fled.

Look at David now. Is not this a figure of that greater victory of David's greater son?

As Jonathan looked across the valley of Elah, so a soul is sometimes brought to look across the valley of death. And, oh how terrible the dismay, if the great adversary is there, and all the sins of a past life there, all standing in dread array, like the hosts of the Philistines. May I ask you to look across the narrow deep valley, and tell me, has the Saviour Jesus been revealed to your soul, as the saviour David stood revealed to Jonathan? Surely the one is only a picture of the other. But there was reality and certainty to Jonathan, and this for ever won his heart to David. This matter is so momentous—the valley that separates us from eternity so narrow—another, nay, perhaps not another breath, and then, after death, is it to you the judgment? If so, surely you have greater cause for dismay than Israel had in that day. You may have been as mighty a prince in your day as Jonathan. Saul's trumpet may have often sounded your praise. But has God revealed Jesus to your soul—the sent one of God—the despised and rejected sent one of God? Do you see Him? Then tell me, What are those wounds in His hands and His side? Sweetly do they speak to the heart, "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do." Look at the mighty Conqueror, the sent one of God. "Behold the Lamb of God!" Oh, how wonderful the effect of simple faith in Jesus, as the one who has finished the work of redemption! Forty days had this adversary defied Israel: but for forty centuries had Satan defied man and dishonoured God. Who but the holy Substitute could meet the adversary and maintain the glory of God? Yes, as David smote Goliath in the valley of Elah, so has Jesus met the whole power of Satan in the valley of Death. Oh, my soul, well doest thou to meditate on this: every sin that the accuser could bring against thee, has been borne by Jesus.

There were two things produced in Jonathan by this first revelation, so to speak, of David: he loved him as his own soul; and he stripped himself. Surely this was very simple and natural. How did he look in the face of that shepherd youth, who, taking his own life in his hand, with his sling and his stone had wrought such a great deliverance! And can you look at Jesus—who gave His precious life, who bore the wrath due to your sins, who shews you His hands and His side, who sweetly says, Peace be unto you—when you know this? Can you not love Him because He thus first loved you?

Thus you see faith must produce love. How beautifully simple is all this! But the stripping—Why did Jonathan strip himself? Well that other Hebrew of the Hebrews tells us why *he* did. And I think the one just explains why the other did it. I take these two because each of them was the finest Hebrew of his day. He was a noble Jew—that Jonathan of our type; and Saul of Tarsus was one of the finest Pharisees that ever stood up in his own righteousness. Turn to Philippians iii. and read the honest account he gives of himself. He says, “touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.” This was what this Hebrew of the Hebrews could say; and, oh! how many a poor pharisee in our time sighs to say it! But now let us put Jonathan’s question to Paul. Why did Paul strip himself? How clear and simple his answer: “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith.” (Phil. iii. 7—9.)

Very beautiful and very becoming, surely, this stripping is! The despised Jesus, who had died on the cross for his sins, now appearing to this Hebrew of the

Hebrews, this pharisee of the Pharisees, in glory above the brightness of the sun: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." What a change those words produced! A new heart was given, and a heart for ever linked with that Jesus in glory. In after years how could this Paul write of the glorious One that had been delivered for our offences, and raised from the dead for our justification, to be our subsisting righteousness—yea, that God had raised Him from among the dead, the holy righteous one, our perfect and everlasting righteousness before God and the whole universe.* And, oh! the peace of God that fills the soul that thus *knows Him* and the power of His resurrection.

Now we must see that all which had exalted Saul the Hebrew of the Hebrews was a discount against Christ; and, hence, oh! how gladly he strips himself that Christ may be all. Is your heart thus knit to Jesus? and are you thus stripped?

As Paul stripped off all, so "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." What a sense of the worthiness of David the saviour king! As a military prince, this giving up of the sword is very significant—what a surrender! It is written of the enthroned four and twenty elders that they "cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power."

I take these, then, to be two very blessed marks of a Christian as illustrated in our Jonathan. Such a sense of the value of redemption through the blood of Jesus that the heart is knit to Him in love; and such a sense of what He is as our righteousness or justification, risen from the dead, as at once to strip us of the old robe of self-righteousness—yea, every rag, and sword, and girdle—all, all that is of self, its righteousness, its effort, fighting, and walk; all given up to Jesus the

* Rom. iv. 25; v. 18; 1 Cor. i. 30; Phil. iii. 9, 10.

righteousness of God—Christ in resurrection. And sure I am, dear reader, if Christ has not thus been revealed to you, as David stood revealed to Jonathan, nothing could induce you to give up your old robe, garment, sword, and girdle. If you cannot feel quite sure that your old robe is fit for the presence of God, the devil bids you hope that you may yet fight a better fight, and walk a better walk: it may be mass-making, law-keeping, rites and ceremonies—anything, if Satan can only keep you out of Jonathan's stripping-room, where you are nothing and Christ is all.

We will now look a little further at this instructive history. (1 Sam. xix.) Where Christ is truly known, there is not a mere momentary excitement, but abiding love to Jesus and increasing faith in His finished work—such faith as must confess him before men, at whatever cost. Surely we see this in Paul and in all the members of the early Church; and so I read in our chapter, "But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David." "Delighted much!" We should notice at this point of the history a striking parallel. At this time the kingdom of Israel was outwardly governed by the house of Saul. But God had rejected him and his house, and Samuel had anointed David. And faith knew him as the anointed and coming king. In like manner faith now knows from the record of God's word that the glory of this world, with its kingdoms and its god, is all judged and about to be swept away at the coming of the King of Righteousness and Prince of Peace. Well, so it was, I say, in Israel at this time. The hatred that is now manifested to Christ and His true followers was in a like manner shewn by Saul to David and his true little band of men. Do not forget this—will you? for you will find the world's hatred to Christ a true test of your own heart. Thus was Jonathan tested. "Saul spake to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David." And what does the loving Jonathan do? He told

David. Is not this beautiful? O that you and I may go and do likewise! Have you not at times been greatly surprised to find hatred to Jesus where you least expected it? You may have been invited to meet a few friends, nearly all professors. (Saul was a professor, by the by.) Very soon you find that any subject or person may be introduced for conversation, except your much-loved Jesus, in whom you greatly delight. And as to the thought that He is the glorious coming King, you must not name such a thing. Oh rise up from among these hypocrites! Go first and tell Jesus, and then speak for Jesus as Jonathan spake for David; or remember, if you do not, you, silently at least, deny your Lord, by even sitting with them who practically welcome Barabbas and say, Away with the returning Lord.

“Jonathan spake good of David to Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good. For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it and didst rejoice; wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?”

Now was not this a good confession? We find Paul in the same track: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” And Jesus says, “Who-soever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mark viii. 38.) And as Jonathan spake good of David, O cannot we speak good of Jesus? Has he not wrought a great salvation? Apart from Jesus, is there anything truly great or good? Has any other one glorified God about sin, as He has on the cross? Does any other thing or person give eternal life but the risen Jesus? Nay, does any other thing

give peace even to a guilty conscience but the blood of Jesus? I am not aware of anything in the history of this world, of all nations, that enables man to stand on the brink of the grave, that valley of Elah, and look steadfastly into eternity, and say, We are always confident. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." And far more, tell me, Has not Jesus brought life and incorruptibility to light? Yea, though the self-existing One, by whom all created things began to exist; yet has he not through death taken a new place for man, beyond sin and death? And, as the beginning of that new creation, is he not what we in resurrection shall for ever be, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality?" And is He so soon to be manifested who is indeed God manifest—ineffable centre of universal worship, whose smile shall fill a universe with joy? Oh in these few remaining days of His rejection here below, shall we be ashamed of Jesus? As our Jonathan confessed David in the doomed house of Saul, so, and more, may we confess Jesus before this doomed world!

Come, let us now pursue our Jonathan a little further in 1 Samuel xx. Saul still seeks the life of David. "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him (that was born) after the Spirit, even so it is now." But persecution marks out the true followers of Jesus: "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations." This was very tenderly expressed, but it shewed how the heart of Jesus valued the faithful fellowship of His disciples, however dull, when the outward house sought His life and took counsel to put Him to death. Surely this was beautifully foreshadowed in our chapter. Precious to David was the sympathy of devoted Jonathan. How it sweetened the bitter cup! Those words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" tell out fully *how the heart of Jesus*

beats for all the members here below. And do they not also shew how dear to Him is sympathy with the hated and persecuted ones? Oh what a strange thing man's hatred of Jesus was, and still is! Have you not noticed from that day to this, man's hatred is in proportion to the Christian's faithfulness to Christ? Is it not so? Who are really hated by the great outward house of our day, but the despised few who desire to really tread in His blessed footsteps? Are any others slandered and hated as these? But, from the days of Paul to this moment, the worst lie against Christ is this, that if we give to Him the honour of complete and everlasting salvation, without works of our own as a make-weight, that this doctrine is immoral, or at least will lead to disobedience, and carelessness of walk. How fully this lie is rebuked in our Jonathan. "Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee." Precious obedience, heart obedience, fruit of faith! I might point everywhere in the New Testament and find the same fruit. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is the first impulse of the new-born Paul.

Is this the language of your heart to your precious Lord? "Whatsoever thy soul desireth I will even do it for thee." This goes very far beyond the law, good and holy and just as it was. It is the heaven-implanted desire to do the will of the Lord, even whatsoever He desireth me to do. And there was this readiness in Jonathan to serve David in the house of his father, and to shew David the disposition of his father, be it kindness or hatred. I think we may say he was truly David's man in the house of Saul.

Judging from outward appearance, David was the rejected outcast; and yet how beautifully faith knew him as the chosen of Jehovah. "And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul." And when the new moon was come, and the king sat in his seat,

David's place was empty; yet how fully did Jonathan confess David, though this confession brought down upon him the severe anger of his father, Saul. "And he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse and rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die." Still Jonathan speaks good for David: "Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?" "If they have hated me, they will hate you also."

"And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him." Well did he now know the determined hatred of his father to David. How much his heart felt as the arrow of warning was shot, we may gather from this: "As soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times; and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed; and Jonathan went into the city." The sorrows of God's anointed David were but shadows of the deeper sorrows of God's only begotten Son, whether we look at the manifold sufferings by which He was perfected as the Captain of our salvation, or at the SUFFERING OF DEATH, by which He is now glorified at the right hand of God. No doubt, the pressure on the heart of David was used in giving utterance to those then future sorrows of our Jesus.

But at this point of Jonathan's history—and it is a solemn point—we must remember that David was now an outcast from the house of Saul, and that the Lord Jesus is at this moment an outcast from this world.

That as Saul hated David, so, and more so, has this world hated, rejected, cast out, yea murdered, the anointed Christ of God. And that He is still the hated and rejected Jesus.

But there was another side of the picture. God had rejected the house of Saul, though He long bore with it; yea, during all the time of David's rejection. And He had chosen and anointed David. And the Lord was with David, even as He was not with Saul. Surely Samuel knew this, and David knew this, though faith was sorely tried. And Jonathan knew this, as we shall see in his next and last interview with David. But I must now tell you of *the one thing* lacking in our Jonathan. It is very painful to do so; shall I tell you why? Ah, there are so many Jonathans in our day. Is it not sad to know Jesus, and to love Jesus, to confess Him, to delight much in Jesus, to desire to serve Him in this evil world, and yet to stop short of the one thing lacking? What can this one thing be? My reader may say, through the grace of God, All that you have said of this typical Jonathan as yet, is true of me. You can then remember the time when God brought your sins before you, and the adversary was permitted to harass your soul, as Goliath defied the armies of Israel at the valley of Elah, and you found no deliverance, no peace, until the Holy Spirit revealed Jesus to your soul, the sent one of God, and told you how He had finished the great work of redemption, and that through His precious blood your sins were for ever gone, as the Philistines fled from the valley of Elah. And did this win your heart to Jesus, as Jonathan was knit to David? You may have had many a crushing of human pride since then. But can you say, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee? And have you been stripped of all self-righteousness? Are you fairly shut up to Jesus? Is He all and you nothing? Is He precious to your soul? Can you say, I delight much in Him? For sure I am He is much delighted in, even

as we learn the emptiness of all else, and the worthlessness of all that is of man. And have you confessed Jesus in your own society, in, it may be, your own house? Have you held on, speaking well of Jesus in the face of all hatred and opposition! As Jonathan was David's witness, David's man, have you been the witness of Jesus? Has it been your delight to hold communion with and serve Jesus, as Jonathan delighted to tell David and serve him? If so, is it not painful that there should be all this, and yet come short of the one thing lacking?

Did you notice the last few words as to our Jonathan? (chap. xx. 42), "And David arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city." And where did David depart to? In chapter xxii. we find him in the cave of Adullam. "And when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men." But there was one that was not with him, and that one was even our Jonathan. But perhaps you ask, Is it possible that Jonathan knew of the coming reign of David, and not be with him? Well, let us read Jonathan's last interview with David, and we shall see there can be no mistake about that.

"And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the band of Saul my father shall not find thee: and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the Lord. *And David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house*"—and that house the house of the rejected Saul. Yes, it is quite clear he well knew the coming reign of his beloved David; and as well did he know the rejection

of Saul's house: and yet he failed to go outside and take his place, the true place of faith, with God's chosen and coming king.

Do you know, my reader, the end of the present age? Do you know that when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh?—that judgment must begin at the house of God?—that as the apostate house of Saul was cut off, so shall apostate Christendom be spued out of His mouth? Now do you not see much around you bearing this character of soul? What a day of blowing of trumpets! Let the Hebrews hear what we are doing! Never was there such a day of man's doing and trumpeting. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This is our Lord's own description of the last state of the great outward doomed house. (Rev. iii.) Great in the world, indeed, was Saul when compared with the outcast David, but how wretched and miserable his end!

But do you know, my reader, that the earth-rejected Jesus is even now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and that He will quickly come, and with an assembling shout call up His saints to meet Him in the air? (1 Thess. iv.) And that afterwards He will come in judgment on them that have not obeyed the gospel (2 Thess. i.); and that then the glorious reign of the now rejected Jesus will surely take place? Do you say, Yes, I know all these things will surely come to pass. And do you know that God has by His Spirit gathered a few of the Lord's redeemed ones to the now despised Jesus, as David's four hundred were gathered to him in the cave of Adullam? True, they were a sorry company, those four hundred, but they were gathered to such a David. Ah! if Jonathan had been one of them, would his body have ever been fastened to the walls of Bethshan?

But it is high time to put the question to you: Where are you? Are you building wood, hay, and stubble in the great house of Saul—the outward, showy Christendom—that which professes to be the Church of God, but which has indeed become the church of the world? Or have you taken your place outside the camp with the rejected but coming Jesus? Ah! I think I hear you say, Oh! those separated Christians, they are such dreadful people! So our Jonathan might have said of David's four hundred. But what of Jesus? Is He not worthy that you should forsake everything, and identify yourself alone with Him? You will find a few others, through mercy, in the same blessed place; though indeed the *religious world* tries hard to make them a sect, and, as they were in the days of Paul, a sect everywhere spoken against. I do not mince the matter. There is the great outward house like the house of Saul; and there is separation from it, and identification with Jesus in His rejection, like the four hundred with David; and if you are a Christian, you are certainly in one place or the other. Perhaps you say, "I get my bread in this great worldly system." Well, that is, I grant, a very serious matter. But so did Jonathan, and you see the end of it in his case—walls of Bethshan. But, says another, Do you not see the influence I have by staying where I am? what a congregation! what opportunities to speak for Jesus? Do you think I should have the same, or anything like the same opportunities, if I took my place outside in the name of Jesus? And think how much my own relations would be against it! And to leave all the splendour and comfort of all that is admired in the world, where one can truly speak for Jesus. Ah, my friend, Jonathan could have said all this. But why did he lose his reward for his love and service to David? and why did he come to the shameful walls of Bethshan? Was it not because he acted on the very same principle that so many act upon now? He clung

to the outward, which God had rejected, and failed to take his place with the poor and despised followers of God's anointed one. You know, my reader, that God is not with the bazaars and worldliness and tolerated evil of the professing church. If you delight much in Jesus; if you desire to do whatsoever He desireth you; then surely His own voice will be heard in these precious scriptures concerning Himself. Oh, is it not sad to be spending your time in and for that which is to be destroyed at the coming of the Lord? Occasional visits and communion, and then back to the outward house of Saul! Ah, this will not do. You may have Jonathan's four marks of true conversion to Christ, and yet lose your reward. Like Jonathan (1 Samuel xviii. 1.)—

1. You may have been *filled with love to Jesus*. Beholding Him the Lamb of God that has put away your sins.
2. *Stripped of self* for Jesus. (Ver. 4.)
3. Make full confession of Jesus, delighting much in Him. (Chap. xix. 1—5.)
4. You may have desired to do whatsoever Jesus desireth. (Chap. xx. 4.)

But, as Rebecca left all for her coming Isaac, are you willing to leave all and take your place of devoted identification with Jesus?

We hear no more of our Jonathan from the sad, sad moment he left David in the wood of Ziph! (O beware of doing the same!) until we come to the last chapter (xxxv.) of his history.

And there will be a last chapter in your history and mine. It is not here a question of salvation: some shall be saved so as by fire, and all their works burned up. (1 Cor. iii.) And did not Jonathan lose all the reward of his early devoted love and service? Slain on Gilboa with his wretched father, and his body nailed with his to the walls of Bethshan.

David's lament shews how much Jonathan lost. (2 Samuel i.) These are but a few feeble thoughts on this wondrous lesson. Do ponder it well. The dark cloud of judgment on the outward house of Christendom

is gathering. Like the house of Saul, its days are numbered; and the glory of our Jesus is about to burst forth. Would you have an abundant entrance into His kingdom and glory? Then do not leave Him in the *wood* and return to the *house*. Blessed companionship with Jesus! Oh! "LET US GO FORTH THEREFORE UNTO HIM WITHOUT THE CAMP [of the religious world] bearing his reproach."

Saul's javelin was allowed to miss David: but the world was allowed to nail Jesus to the cross. And "know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Can we be outside Saul's house, and yet alive in it? Are you, my reader, dead with Christ? are you risen with Him? Then surely you are called to be, as it were, one of David's four hundred—a witness of the dead and risen Christ. Oh, if you have been washed in His blood, saved by His finished work, then may He give you, and give me, grace to cleave to Himself, with full purpose of heart.

C. S.



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PERFECTION;

WHERE IS IT, AND WHAT IS IT?

“ Let us go on to perfection.”

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PERFECTION;

WHERE IS IT, AND WHAT IS IT?

“Let us go on to perfection.”

IN many souls, there is an earnest desire after increased holiness in these last days; and in the midst of so much declension and coldness of heart, that desire, and longing of heart for holiness and consecration to God, should be encouraged in every possible way according to God. With this object I now write a few thoughts on this subject. To help every anxious soul is my desire, and to hinder none.

As I know this will be read by those deeply interested in this subject, with them I can speak freely. I feel one question pressing upon my heart, and I know it has pressed on many of your hearts. How is it that so many of those professing holiness of heart, and many sincerely seeking it, have been so sadly discouraged? so many disappointed? so many almost giving up the pursuit in despair? And have you not heard precious souls, who have, and do, profess holiness, ask this question also—How is it there is so little growth? We attend holiness conferences, meetings, and preachings, and it is painfully felt there is little or no growth: how is this? The Lord, I believe, will enable me to

answer these solemn inquiries. And I am sure He alone can.

It is then of all importance, that we rightly *understand* this portion of scripture, and all others which speak on this subject. Our blessed Lord says "He that receiveth seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and *understandeth* it; which bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." There is no uncertainty as to this, then, that all real growth and fruit-bearing must flow from a right reception and right understanding of the word of God.

Now have we been sufficiently careful in this matter. Take these few words, "Let us go on unto perfection." Who are the persons thus addressed? What are they to go on *from*, and what is the perfection they are to go on *to*? We may have carelessly quoted and used this text, as though it were addressed to *all* Christians; and as if it meant we were to go on, as some say, crucifying the flesh or mortifying it, either progressively or by one sudden act of faith, until we attain to purity within. Any way perfect purity within is the perfection supposed by many to be spoken of here.

For the present I will leave the inquiry as to crucifying or mortifying the flesh, and speak of that later on.

May I ask you now to go with me to this epistle *to the Hebrews*, and calmly yet closely inquire what is meant in these words we have before us. One thing is very clear, the whole epistle, and therefore these words, were addressed to professedly believing Hebrews. And we must not forget that great numbers of them were very zealous of the law. (Acts xxi. 20.) And that they were very dull of hearing, as it is written, "For when for the time

ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age," or perfect, see margin. (Heb. v. 12.) Surely we need to study these words carefully, and then bear in mind that the persons specially addressed were Jewish professors, and were babes as to the full doctrine of Christ.

You may have noticed that divisions, or sects, have the same sad tendency, or worse; so as to keep us carnal and babes; and that the apostle could not speak unto the Corinthians as perfect or of full growth; but only as unto babes. This is most clearly put in 1 Corinthians ii. 6-7; iii. 1-3.

And if we would rightly understand this subject, we must bow to these solemn admonitions. But was this word only addressed to believing Jews, who were in great danger of going back to Judaism? are not the great mass of Christians in division? Yes. And are not great multitudes of professing Christians gone, or going back to Judaism, to forms and ceremonies? It is too true. Then surely there is a voice to us now, as well as to them then—"Let us go on to perfection." This whole epistle to the Hebrews is on this subject. The going on *from* that which made nothing perfect, *to* that which for ever perfects.

God's ways are not as our ways; we may, yea, we often do, look within to find perfection. But this is not God's way in this epistle. Granted to come to perfection is the purpose and object of the epistle; to lead these babes on to that. But what is the way or course pursued? The perfect one is

first set before us. Yes, God's way is very simple. The law made nothing perfect; all perfection is found in Christ, the perfect one. Thus God begins. In chapter i. the glories of the perfect one, the Son of God, shine forth. God had borne with the church at Jerusalem in tender grace. He knew how hard it was for them to give up all that was visible. The glorious temple in which they still worshipped: its sacrifices and ritual; its ancient priesthood; what a power all this had; and then the reign of their Messiah postponed (Acts iii. 19-21)—I say, all that glorious reign postponed; for a time every earthly promise set aside. And then we should remember, the worship of the early church was purely spiritual. No *place* of worship on earth; no separate priesthood; positively nothing for the natural eye to rest upon: even Jesus was gone up to heaven. And more, the Roman armies were now soon to come, and utterly destroy the temple, trample under foot the city of Jerusalem, and after fearful slaughter of the rejecting Jews, the remnant were to be scattered amongst all nations. All this was present to the mind of God. Now was it not most tender and gracious of our God to give them this very epistle, to draw them from the shadows to Christ?

The destruction of Jerusalem was near, they knew it not; but God knew it. The destruction of the great apostate Babylon is near; men know it not but God knows it. (1 Thess. v. 3; Rev. xvii. xviii.) God, in tender love, would now draw us from the present Judaised Christianity, that makes nothing perfect; to that adorable perfect One, and His ever perfect work.

Even the writer of this epistle is purposely kept out of sight. God speaks, and the writer

identifies himself with the believing remnant of Israel. God who had spoken by prophets, now speaks, or hath spoken, unto us by or in His Son. God was manifest, God spake in Him, who is the appointed heir, not merely of Palestine, but of all things. "By whom he made the universe." Glory after glory shines forth. He was not *made*, but "*being* the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person," or exact expression of His substance, "upholding all things by the word of his power."

Now follows a marvellous glory of the Son of God. "When he had by himself purged our sins, [or made purgation for our sins] sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." In Ephesians i. we see Jesus *raised* from the dead and ascended up above all principalities and powers, as the head of the body his church. But here in His right and title as Son, having finished that amazing work, the propitiation for sins, in the glory of His own person, He entered the highest heavens, and *sat* down. How far this exceeded the utmost expectation of the Jews! Their Messiah is *sat* down, not in the temple, but in heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

But do you ask what have these glories to do with our perfection, or with going on to perfection? They have all to do with it. Truly it is not man's way; He would be constantly occupied with himself: but God thus unfolds the varied glories of the Son—THE PERFECT ONE; and "we all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians iii. 18.

Then let me ask you to take this chapter (Heb. i.), and look to God to enable you by the Spirit to

behold the open face, the unveiled glories of the Son. Do not take a passing glance; but behold the Lamb of God; meditate on each distinct sentence. The Jews had justly boasted of angelic visits, and ministries, to their fathers, and they had great veneration for those heavenly beings; but now trace the lofty contrasts of the Son, with all created beings, all angels shall worship Him: all are His servants. He is truly God: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Truly man: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Marvellous grace to be linked with this glorious one, He who is Jehovah's fellow. He takes the feeble little flock, and owns them in resurrection as His fellows. Perfect humanity! Precious grace! And this is so real that the angels which are His servants minister to us also, so we read "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall inherit salvation?" Oh think of this! as we pass along this weary journey, those holy beings, who do His pleasure, attend our path; and His pleasure is our service.

Read on in chapter ii. and you will find solemn warnings, lest the professing Hebrew Christians should slip away from so great salvation. There you will have the authority of His word. We have seen the glories of the person of the Son, now the authority of His word. It was confirmed by the apostles who heard, God bearing witness. Again He is contrasted with angels; the world to come is put in subjection to Him as Son of man, not to them. We do not see all things yet put under Him. "But we see Jesus." Oh meditate! behold this wondrous sight! the *suffering* of His

death! the sufferings of His life here below! now crowned with glory—perfected as the captain of our salvation. And in bringing sons to glory, He takes them into oneness with Himself before God. How precious every sentence! “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. “For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” What joy this gives our blessed Jesus, saying, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” “And again,” Jesus says, “Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.”

And this introduces Him as our merciful and faithful high priest. He did not thus take angels by the hand, but He took the seed of Abraham. All this is specially addressed to the believing seed of Abraham, and is full of deepest instruction to us, in these last days. Do you say, “But what has this to do with christian perfection? It is so different from all I have read on the subject.”

Well, it is God’s epistle on perfection. Truly His ways are not as our ways, neither His thoughts as our thoughts. Our thoughts on perfection would lead us to the most unprofitable task of *considering ourselves*. Not so this epistle; not so the thoughts of God. No, He sets before us His glorious Son; and then says, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, CONSIDER the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”

If you want leanness and spiritual poverty, consider yourself; be occupied with yourself. If you want to be unwise, compare yourselves amongst yourselves. If you would grow in grace, in holiness, in conformity to Christ, then consider Jesus

as thus set before us. There must be more prayerful study of the precious word.

And now read the solemn warnings against unbelief—and this done, then the glories of our great high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. This brings us to the condition of these Hebrew professors of Christ. They had not gone on to perfection. They were only babes in divine truth, having a tendency to go back to the law, and was not their condition too sad a picture of Christianity in this day? We shall see.

In chapter vi. the persons spoken of are the professing Hebrew believers. And the writer identified himself with them. Then keeping before his mind the glories of the Son of God, he says, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ [or the word of the beginning of Christ], let us go on unto perfection." Now mark, this could not have been said to those who were of full growth, or perfect. To those who had fully given up, or gone on from, Judaism, to Christ, where could they go on unto beyond Christ?

Judaism was a system of repetitions, because it made nothing perfect. In Christ all is divinely perfect, and therefore cannot be repeated.

Hence we read "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." With the Jew of old, it was sinning and repenting, over and over again, and with the repentance, the blood of bulls, and goats. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" The repentance of the Jew of old never brought him into the presence of

God. The way into the holiest was not opened, he, so to speak, stood without, afar off.

Before the death of Christ that was the true place. "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians ii. 13.) Is there not a striking contrast in this? And so "of faith toward God." However bright might be the faith of the Jew of old in a coming Messiah—yet how widely different is now the faith in God, which knows that He has sent His Son; that we have redemption through His blood, and the forgiveness of our sins? Yea, to go back from this, to faith toward God, as the Jew had it, before Jesus died, and rose again, would be to deny that Jesus had come in the flesh. And so "of the doctrine of baptisms [washings], and laying on of hands." These washings of the body, in case of leprosy, or defilements, were once the appointed ordinances of God. And as types and shadows most precious. Look at that sinning Jew: see him lay his hand on the head of that goat, and confess his sin on its head. This was identification, and the sin is imputed to the goat. It is killed, and the Jew is forgiven. This was most precious, in its true place, as the word of the beginning of Christ. But now, since He has died, the one sacrifice for sins, to go back to these offerings, or laying on of hands, would be to trample underfoot the blood of Christ. Oh yes, this is all very clear.

But what would you say "of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgments?" This is a very important point of truth. I gather from Josephus and the words of Martha (John xi. 24), "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," and the doctrine held by all Jews, to

this time, is, that all mankind must die. That there will be a general resurrection of all the dead together; that all must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works; and that the sentence of judgment will be eternal. I know that this is the doctrine of Jews, Mahometans, and Roman, Greek, and Protestant churches. But this is not the complete truth or full truth. It was the beginning of the truth. Death is a reality, and resurrection of the dead is a reality. These are facts and compared with human philosophy great truths. But the resurrection from amongst the dead is the perfect truth or complete truth. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." Many other scriptures confirm this statement. There shall intervene at least a thousand years betwixt the completion of the first resurrection and the second. Revelation xx.

But now as to judgment, the fundamental truth involved is of all-importance. If all have to come into judgment, then must all be condemned, for all are guilty, and hence the great value of the full, perfect truth as to this.

If I have to stand before God to be judged I should be lost; Christ was offered to bear my sins. He has been judged on the cross as my substitute. My sins, all my sins, have been laid on Him. Why it is just this that makes the difference. My substitute has thus been judged on the cross. The rejecters of Christ must be judged before the great white throne. Do you not see that? Judgment on sin, there must be! Which is it? Is your judgment past, or future? It cannot be both, thank God.

“Hath everlasting life, and shall not come unto judgment (Greek), but is passed from death unto life.” These are the believer’s three divine certainties from the lips of Jesus. John v. 24.

Thus the doctrine of death to all men, resurrection of the dead, and judgment, contains the beginning of truth but is not the full truth of Christianity. Christ coming for those that wait for Him (without sin unto salvation, having borne their sins), a thousand years at least before the judgment of the great white throne, is the more complete truth—in other words, perfection. It is this blessed hope, for which all believers waited, before the professing church went back to Judaism.

On this subject let me ask you to go on unto perfection; do look to the Lord to give you the Spirit’s thoughts on the following scriptures in reference to this. See John xiv. 1–3; Romans viii. 23; 1 Corinthians i. 7, 8; xv. 21, 23, 51, 52; Philippians iii. 20, 21; Colossians iii. 4; 1 Thessalonians i. 10; ii. 19; iii. 13; iv. 13–18; v. 23; 2 Thessalonians ii. 1; Titus ii. 12, 13; Revelation xx. 5–12.

Now this wondrous privilege, of being raised from among the dead at the coming of Christ or of being changed if living until that event, and in one moment *as He is*, in contrast with the rest of mankind, being left a thousand years, and rising to judgment; I say it is this that marks the infinite value of the atonement, as applied to those who believe in Him. And therefore now to go back to the doctrine of a general resurrection of the dead, and a general judgment, is, though ignorantly, to undervalue the death of Christ.

Now do not suppose that scripture contradicts itself; oh never. “Well certainly I thought,” some

will say, "that Matthew xxv. taught the general resurrection of all the dead; and that all would stand before the judgment seat, both sheep and goats." How carelessly we read scripture! I cannot tell you how surprised I was to find that not only does this solemn chapter not bring *all* the dead before this judgment, but if you read it you will not find *any* of the dead in this scene at all. They are living nations who shall be dealt with according to their reception of the testimony and treatment of the *Jewish remnant*, when Jesus comes to reign.

But shall not we stand before the judgment (beema) of Christ, and be rewarded according to our labour or service? Ah, most blessedly true; but is that the same thing as standing to be judged for our sins? Surely not. Let us search the scriptures, and leave behind all that hinders our going on to perfection. Christians have no conception how far they have gone back, or, rather, they have never gone forward to perfection.

We must not overlook that some of these professors were in great danger of relapsing to Judaism. The class here spoken of, "once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." These are described by the Lord as "he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself." (Matthew xiii. 20, 23.) Let us rejoice with trembling to see how far a person may go, and yet be deceived! such was the light and sense of Christ as the heavenly gift, and power of the Holy Ghost, and authority of the word of God. And so near did the world to come appear to the early church, that a person

could not possibly leave Judaism and take a place, if only in profession, in such a scene, without being greatly altered outwardly. And great joy anon within. But the testing time came, and if there was no *root*, there would be no fruit.

Now to give up Christ, and go back to Judaism, was to crucify Him—such an apostate from Christ would have to deny and curse Him, before he could be restored back to Judaism. This brings out the force of the argument. Let not such an one be deceived. There was once the renewal of repentance, in the law, but now that kind of renewal is impossible. The ritual is set aside, and was about to be utterly destroyed. No doubt the returning Jew would again take his sin-offering, and laying on his hands expect to be renewed afresh. Impossible! It was terrible. It was putting the Son of God to open shame.

The sad mistake, however, that many have made as to this, is that it referred to a Christian; that if he fell into sin it would make it impossible to restore him to repentance. This would be worse than Judaism of old; for there was repentance and restoration then to him. Nothing can be more certain than this, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

If we see what is spoken of here, the giving up Christ, and going back to Judaism, all is clear. Of *true Christians* He says, "But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

It is now high time we went on to perfection; therefore "let us go on to perfection." I do not see, however, how we could have gone on until all these points were cleared up; do you?

As this is God's epistle on perfection, we cannot do better than follow the order God has laid down in it. First, then, as to priesthood.

The principle of a human priesthood had been tried for fifteen hundred years; an ordained priesthood, separated from the people, consecrated to the service and worship of God. All nations bear witness that this is a principle that man esteems. It is remarkable how this principle, sometimes called the clergy and laity, was adopted by every idolatrous worship on earth. The rude Briton, the polished Greek, or the ancient Egyptians, and Chaldeans. All had their priesthood. But in Israel "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." So that the Jewish priesthood, had not only antiquity, but divine authority.

All this is fully admitted, and stated in this epistle. Was there not then perfection in this ordained priesthood? No; for "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec?" Then, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity—a change also of the law." "For the law made nothing perfect."

Now think what a change is here spoken of. The gorgeous solemn service of the priesthood—yea the whole system, and ministration of the law is set aside, and why? because these made nothing perfect. No perfection by the law. The Jew had the temple, the priesthood, the law, with all its beautiful ritual. What had the Christian? a material temple on earth? not one, except the Christians themselves, which temple are ye. A priesthood? not one, if

even Christ were on earth he should not be a priest. A ritual service? no, he must beware of going back to such beggarly elements. If the Jew had all that the eye could rest upon, with delight: what has the Christian? Let it be reckoned up. It is this, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens!"

I would give a very simple illustration. It is a bright clear morning, how very far you can see; but stay, how is it all the lamps of the city are put out? They were very useful in the dark. True, but they would be of no use in the light. The sun shines in all his brightness in the heavens. This is perfect creation-light, and the lamps and the darkness have passed away. The priests were the lamps, useful in the time of darkness. But now the true light shineth brighter than the noon-day sun.

This one great high priest, after the order of Melchisedec, the royal priest, had been clearly foretold, in their own psalms and prophets. But there are again, in the professing church, priests and candles. Yes, it is sadly true, and why? Because the mass are not going on to perfection, but back to the darkness of Judaism.

If you light the lamps of a city in the full blaze of noon-day light, it is saying the light of the sun is not enough. If you ordain a human priesthood on earth, you deny the all-sufficiency of Christ, our one great high priest, set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens. Let the sun arise and the lamps disappear. Let Christ have His own blessed place before the soul, and a separate priesthood must vanish like a dissolving view. He hath an unchanging priesthood; He is

able to save to the uttermost. Having loved His own, He loveth them to the end. He never fails to wash our feet; to restore our souls. Truly God, really man, infinite power, tenderest sympathy. Let me beg of you again, to study the high priesthood of Jesus, as revealed in this epistle, and thus go on, for in Him you will find perfection.

The second point I name, as to perfection, is access to God. You will read a description of the first tabernacle and service in Hebrews ix. 1-7. Then "the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not made manifest, whilst as the first tabernacle was yet standing." And that all these services and sacrifices "could not make him that did the service *perfect*, as pertaining to the conscience." We will notice the conscience when we come to chapter x. And now as to access to God. The law and its priesthood could not bring the worshipper into the presence of God. It fell short of this, could not finish or perfect it. But we, that is all believers, have boldness to enter into the holiest "by the blood of Jesus." Now this is perfection. I cannot say to a well-instructed Christian, as to access, Let us go on. He is there, he knows it is the place of every child of God by the blood of Jesus—in contrast with the Jew under law, who could never enter. The priesthood could not bring him there. Christ has, and thus again in Christ, we have found perfection. There are no distinctions of priests and people, clergy and laity in the holiest. How can there be, since all are alike brought there, as purged worshippers? The very principle of priest and laity is, I am in, and you are out; or I am near to God, and you far off—so far that I will be your mouthpiece to God, and God's mouthpiece to you. This

is terrible wickedness. If every believer has boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and yet the pretended priest says of the laity, I am nearer to God than you, then he either does not believe in the blood of Jesus, or he believes in something of greater value than the blood of Jesus, which brings him nearer to God than the believer who has only the blood of Jesus.

If the term Clergyman is only used to convey the thought that he is a servant of Christ, to minister the word of God to Christ's sheep, I have little to say, except, that I judge it better not to use such unscriptural and dangerous distinctions as clergy and laity; and I am sure, if Christ has His true place before the soul, all such distinctions will be distasteful. I love the scriptural terms of evangelist, pastor, &c.

The third point I ask you to notice is perfection as to redemption. The Christian can say, "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." O blessed fact! who can tell its value? Now what could the Jew of old say? Certainly he had been redeemed from the bondage of Egypt; but as to sins? Well, the most he could say was the sins of the nation have been confessed on the head of the scape goat. The sins of three hundred and sixty days—the Jewish year. But when? On the day of atonement. Yes, and the goat has been sent far away, to return no more. And the blood of atonement has been shed, and sprinkled on the mercy seat. But blessed as all this was as pointing forward; yet it could not give the Jew complete redemption from sins for one year of three hundred and sixty days. And if it could? If he could have said, I have redemption for one year, would that have been perfect redemption?

Certainly not! far from it. If you were to give £10 for the redemption of a poor slave you greatly pitied for one year, would that be perfect redemption? Why, it would only make the poor man's case worse, as he lapsed again to slavery, and cruel bondage. No, if it is perfect redemption, you must pay down a sum that shall set him free for ever. Now it is written of our precious Jesus that "by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal* redemption for us."

He did not redeem us for three hundred and sixty days: that would not have been perfect. My reader, if you have redemption, remember, it is, it must be, eternal redemption. Oh how few grasp this blessed fact! How few believe it! Have you eternal redemption by the blood of Jesus, infinite in value? How can it be less than eternal in efficacy? This is the value the blood of Jesus has before God, for all the washed, redeemed on earth and in heaven; and it is always the same. Is it before your soul as it is before God? I can tell you—who have never yet given it this place; all who speak of oft-recurring masses or sacrifices for sins; and all who speak of a fresh application of the blood of Jesus—that if you have redemption at all, you have eternal redemption. You will see this, if you look again at the illustration of the slave. If his redemption is not perfect, or complete, and for ever; if only for one, two, or ten years, then there will need a fresh application of money, to purchase a further redemption. But if redeemed for ever, there can be no such fresh application. Now if you have not gone on to the perfection, in the blood of Jesus once offered, for eternal redemption, then sure, as you have imperfect knowledge or views of that redemption

so surely you will be uneasy, and inconsistent, and talk about fresh applications of the blood of Christ. The scripture never thus speaks.

But you say many professing holiness do thus speak, as though they constantly needed fresh application of the blood of Jesus. Then it is evident they have not gone on to perfection, as to redemption. For they ought to know, and all God's dear children ought to know, that every Christian has eternal redemption in Christ; and eternal redemption is perfect redemption. Therefore we have now gone on until we have again found perfection in Christ.

The fourth point I notice is perfection as to the conscience. We are distinctly assured, the law could never give this perfection. "For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto *perfect*. For then they would have ceased to be offered." (Heb. x. 1-2.) Do take this chapter and weigh every sentence. The blood of bulls and goats could not possibly take away sins. And now we hear the eternal Son, in the counsels of the past, engaging to come, and accomplish this vast work, cost what it may. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." This is twice repeated. "He taketh away the first" (the law, that which made nothing perfect) "that he may establish the second." "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus once."

This is a marvellous depth, perfect consecration, separation to God! But this is not by an act of our own. He said it, He did it. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Oh, let this one offering of

the body of Jesus Christ once, have its full place before your *soul*. Mark well, that all our sins—I speak to those who are saved—were there laid on Him—all our sins were then future. No finite sacrifice could have thus met us, nor could have met God. These could never take away sins. “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.” Was ever glory like this! And as everlasting is its efficacy to us, as its glory to Him, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Oh, do you believe this? can we go on any farther? can there be any perfection beyond “for ever perfected?” That which is infinite cannot be repeated. No, one infinite act for ever perfects all the sanctified, by this offering of the body of Jesus once.

If we have gone on to this perfection, by this one offering, then the worshipper, once purged, has no more conscience of *sins*. He may be conscious of sin and failure, and there will surely be repentance and confession. For this is God's way of restoring the soul in interrupted communion. This is the washing of water by the word. But as to the conscience, all sins have been judged, and borne by Jesus; and so put away, that they can be remembered no more. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” God says it, and there are two witnesses. The Son of God, having finished this very work, sat down on the right hand of God; and the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us. May God give unto us more exalted thoughts of this perfection we have in Christ! “For ever perfected.” No man that understands this can talk of fresh applications of the blood of Christ, or of repeated or continued

sacrifices for sins. The whole system of repetitions, and fresh applications, is taken away; and this one sacrifice stands alone, and for ever perfects. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Oh, let us take our happy place within the veil; "having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

What I would press is this, that in all this that has come before us, there is no attainment. This is the perfection of every child of God. He may be only a babe, and not know it. But it is his all the same. For all this was addressed to those who were only babes; and written to lead them on to perfection. And note also, this perfection is not in themselves, it is in Christ Jesus.

Were you aware, my reader, there was so much of perfection in this epistle? "I did not even know it was upon the subject at all," some will say. Well, do you now see that perfection in Christ is put in direct contrast with the law, which made nothing perfect? The human priesthood made nothing perfect! Our great high priest has perfected the work of atonement, and is perfect now, set down on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, able to save to the uttermost, and will save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him.

Under law the veil hid God from man. The veil is now rent, and the only true place of every child of God is within, not without, that veil. And as to redemption, the death of Jesus, infinite in value, could not obtain an imperfect redemption; so it cannot be a temporary redemption from sin; it is, it must be, perfect, ETERNAL redemption. Oh precious, oh priceless gift! Bless the Lord, O my soul. I have not redemption for a week or a year; but eternal redemption, praise the Lord for ever!

And, as we have seen as to the conscience, the sacrifices of the law could never make the comers thereto perfect, as regards the conscience; but the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ, by which we are sanctified, also *for ever perfects*. Now this is grace beyond all human thought! This truth can only be received by faith; *faith* that bows to the word of God.

You say, perhaps, "Well, but if I should in an hour of temptation fail, and sin, do I not lose all this perfection in Christ at once?" Now this was just where the law failed, and a repetition of sacrifice was needed. And this is just where the one sacrifice of Christ does not fail. No single point in the whole range of truth tests the soul like this, as to whether I am on Jewish or christian ground. If I want a fresh sprinkling of blood, I am on Jewish ground; and not on the for-ever-perfected ground of the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ. So that all who seek relief by masses, or repetitions of any kind, reduce the death of the Son of God to the level of the sacrifice of bulls and goats. Nothing can be more certain than this.

But you say, "How then are the believer's sins dealt with?" Ah, that is just the very marrow of the question. They have been dealt with on the cross. "What, my future sins?" I never ought to say or think of committing future sins, but to follow holiness. "True, but if I should sin again, would not that be a future sin?" Well, as to that, do not you see that all our sins were future when Christ died for them on the cross? Did He die for some of our sins only, or for all of them? He has been the substitute for all our sins first; and then all were future. They have all of them been dealt with in the glorious person of our substitute, Jesus

Christ the Son of God—perfectly dealt with, so dealt with, that we are for ever perfected as to the conscience. That precious blood, once shed, for ever cleanseth us from all sin. And if you are walking in His light, you will know this. Oh how few give this one sacrifice its true place before the soul. I do bless God it has its true place before Him. He sees the blood, and He says, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” And if this were not so, if all our sins had not been laid on Him, then would He have often to have suffered since the foundation of the world.

Do you say, But when the believer sins, is not the Holy Spirit grieved? and does the believer not feel distress of soul and interruption of communion; then what is he to do? If he is not to go to mass, or seek fresh applications of the blood of Jesus, what is he to do? He must assuredly go to his Father in confession: confession to God our Father is the only means of receiving forgiveness of sins. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And for one who has given up Judaism, and taken his place in professed faith in this one offering of Jesus Christ, and commits the fearful wilful sin of going back to the many sacrifices of the law for sin, he will find there are no longer such many sacrifices; and there can on that ground be no more mercy, but a fearful looking for of judgment. Read the solemn warnings to the end of chapter x.

If all this be true, and it is true, how deeply important it is, to have faith, unshaken faith, in the everlasting efficacy of this one sacrifice for sins, once offered. Surely it is; and is not this the very

reason why the Spirit of God brings before us the cloud of witnesses who believed God? Read chapter xi.

But what is this in chapter xii.—THE RACE? The race, that which man puts at the beginning of his books on perfection, God puts at the end. This is very striking. In all the books I have read on perfection, there is the race, sometimes long, and sometimes short, but the race *first*, and perfection at the end of the race, the race to get it. Just so. Now mark this contrast: we have ten chapters, to shew out the perfections of Christ; and how we are for ever perfected by His work; then another chapter to shew the immense importance of believing this—then comes the practical race. God's way is right; all other ways are wrong. Now if you have been travelling after holiness the wrong way, backwards, is there any wonder you should have been so disappointed?

Now for the race. This must be run with patience—not an impatient leap of faith. Israel did not leap into Canaan. No, there must be, mind, not the eye on one another; but the eye on Jesus. Oh what patient endurance! Consider Him—looking off everything else, to Jesus. I see persons professing holiness, clinging to all kinds of systems of men, where evil reigns. There is no laying aside, no coming out from among them, no separation from iniquity. Ah, this is not the race. Be in earnest; let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. You will find the path of Christ a thorny path, but it shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

"There is one thing I am not yet clear about,"

my reader may say, "and before we go any farther I should like to tell you." What is it? "If God accepts us within the veil, for ever perfected worshippers, by the one offering of Christ, it seems as if He made light of our sins and failures. I do not mean that He made light of them on the cross; but in His dealings with us here."

Thank you for that thought. It just prepares us for what follows, in this chapter xii. Mark this, God is not dealing with us as sinners again; but as sons; "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Now study this whole subject of fatherly chastening. Is not this chastening really perfect in its place, and applied to every son? I thank my Father for all the chastening I have known, for these forty years. This is a large subject and very precious.

Our *for-ever-perfect* standing in Christ, through His one offering, must not be confounded with practical holiness. A Christian cannot pray at all that he may be for ever perfected. This he is, this has been done, never to be repeated. How can it? There cannot be two perfected-*for-evers*. This our great high priest hath done. But the Christian cannot pray too much and seek too diligently for practical holiness. This is the very object our Father has in all our chastening. It is all "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness:" "and it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

And now having learnt, or having gone on to perfection in Christ, and having learnt the object of God in all our afflictions and chastening, how beautifully the exhortations come, in their true place. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness,

without which no man shall see the Lord," &c. It will not do to reverse this divine order. We must not begin to follow holiness, in order to *attain* to perfection in Christ. No, we must first know our happy place within the veil, for ever perfected, and then God must be before the soul; no less a standard of holiness must we diligently follow. Thank God for the clearness of His word; and if God is thus before the soul, you will not follow men, except any who are walking in the light of His presence. What is it to follow holiness? It is not only victory over our own lust, blessed be God it is this; but it is real separation from all evil. This will cost (if it can be called cost) much. Can you not say, Lord, deliver me from everything that hinders holy communion with thee? The believing remnant of the Hebrews, then, were called to go outside the camp of Judaism, to Christ Jesus, bearing His reproach. The person of the rejected Christ outside the religious world was then, and may I not say now is, the test of perfect faithfulness?

If you will turn to the seven addresses to the churches, which describe the seven successive stages of the history of Christendom (Rev. ii. iii.),* you will find Thyatira describes exactly the state of the Romish church. Sardis describes as exactly the state of the protestant churches; but Philadelphia describes a feeble remnant, gathered outside the camp, to the person of Jesus, "He that is holy, he that is true." Is there not a voice in this to you? Do you not know that Christendom, both Roman and protestant, is in a state of shameful departure and apostasy from God? The precious Jesus, "the holy and the true," is set

* *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, by C. S., may be had from the same publisher.

before you by the Spirit of God? And if you are seeking to follow holiness, you must follow Him. "Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Far be it from me to write one word, to weaken the earnest desire after holiness. I desire in my inmost soul, to press on with diligent haste, God is my witness; but the right object must be before us. And that object is Christ, outside the camp. If I heard you say, I have just come out of the bath, and I desire to walk in clean paths, and at the very time I saw you walking in a place of mud and filth, how could I believe you? Now what is that awful worldly Christianity around? Mystery, Babylon. Oh let us not merely talk of holiness, but come out of her, cost what it may. "Come out of her, my people," is the word of the Lord. Surely this is intensely practical. Well, let us have Jesus before us, the holy and the true.

Having thus very briefly gone over this epistle on christian perfection—and I trust this paper will serve as an introduction only, for you, to this epistle—I now call your attention to other scriptures, on this deeply important subject.

In the second part of this little tract, I would meditate a little with you on two things: our standing before God in Christ; and our state—Christ in us.

These two things certainly go together in scripture. If you are in Christ, Christ is in you; yet these two things are never confounded, but always kept distinct. Where would you like to turn first?

Well, I have heard much said about the Epistle to the Romans on this subject.

Very good. It is most precious to my own soul.

First, then, the standing. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," whether Gentiles without the law, or Jews under the law. And thus, being sinners, on the ground of law none can have a standing before God. Man is guilty, and therefore by works of law cannot be righteous. "But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested." The righteousness of God must be perfect righteousness, for whatever is of God is perfect. And how has this righteousness of God, in dealing with man, been manifested, since man is guilty, and under judgment? The answer is very clear—it is the propitiation of the blood of Jesus, borne witness to by law and prophets. Thus the same blessed Jesus is brought before us. Behold the cross of our adorable Lord. Infinite person, infinite sacrifice. Oh, this explains, unfolds, the perfect righteousness of God in passing over the sins of the saints of old, and displays the perfect righteousness of God now, in justifying him who believeth in Jesus. Yes, on this principle God was righteous in reckoning righteousness to the Davids and Abrahams of old. They believed God, and righteousness was reckoned to them. (See chap. iv.)

And not only so, "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed (or reckoned), believing on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Here are two things, on the value of which depends our standing before God as to sins.

"He was delivered for our offences." Was this a perfect sacrifice, or an imperfect one? Mark, this is not a work done *by* us, but a work done *for* us, by the perfect, infinite Son of God,

and must be perfect, as God is perfect. Nay, God has shewn this, declared this, for He has raised Him from the dead. "Was raised again for our iustification." Is this perfect? We are for ever perfectly justified from our sins, once laid to His charge, laid on Him! Look up in the face of that glorified Man set at the right hand of God. Could He be more perfect? Oh, certainly not. But He was raised for *our* justification who believe on God that raised Him from the dead. God says so, and I believe it. What He is up there, we are reckoned to be.

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Is this peace perfect, or imperfect? The whole thing is of God, and cannot be imperfect. He gave His Son for our offences. He raised Him from the dead for our justification. The peace, then, that He has, who once bore our sins, as the holy substitute, is and must be our peace. Could His peace be more perfect? then can ours? I cannot pray for justification; I have it. I cannot pray for peace with God; I have it. I may pray for the peace of God to keep my heart; but to pray for peace with God, or to pray for it to be more perfect, would be to doubt the testimony of God. Such is the value of that precious blood, there is not one offence betwixt the believer and God. Apart from this, the work of Christ, to be thus before God, would utterly consume us. But now all is perfect peace with God, in the fullest discovery of all that He is.

All this must be understood, and the soul have perfect peace with God, before there is one word in the epistle on practical holiness. And what perfect access by faith, not by human intercessors, or

by feelings, but by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

If we know this blessed, perfect truth, and through grace have received it, we glory in tribulations, and we are sealed by the Holy Ghost. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. O reader, are you standing afar off, as a Jew of old might, praying for these things? or have you been brought nigh, and can you give thanks for all this? All this is of God.

Just dwell on that thought, the *love of God*. I am looking at some beautiful flowers, but I never think of flowers, without my thoughts rising to heaven. The rain of heaven descends on them, and the dew of heaven pervades every leaf. That rain of heaven descends to the very roots, and pervades the whole plant, and see how each flower opens so gently to the morning sun, and how the sweet perfume ascends to heaven. All this is of God. And so the Holy Ghost distils the love of God into the heart from heaven, until the whole person is pervaded with the love of God. And now the eye opens gently on Christ, the sun of righteousness, and the sweet perfume of praise ascends to God. Oh, blessed God, how perfect are all thy ways! Yes, it is not my love, but God's love, and that love He has commended to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Now, the subject of christian perfection is so full here, that words can scarce be found to express it. The words, "much more," are found five times from verse 9 to the end of Romans v. Just mark them in your Testament, look them out for yourself. Now, these verses, 9 and 10. Is not this

perfect love of God to us? "MUCH MORE, then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Is not this perfect love? If we had been once saved by an imperfect love, and an imperfect sacrifice, for some of our sins—not all—and then left to perish, of course, this would have been sad; but there is no such imperfection here. Do you believe this perfect love of God? If so, this will lead you to perfect joy in God. "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." This closes the first part of the epistle. We have perfect justification from all our sins. We have perfect peace with God, perfect access, sealed with the Holy Ghost; the perfect love of God not only revealed to us, but shed abroad in our hearts, perfectly certain that He who has thus saved us, will save us to the end; so that we joy in God.

And mark, in all this there is no attainment; but the common blessed standing of every Christian. As to sins, all is thus perfectly settled.

Now, as to sin?

What do you mean? I never thought of any difference betwixt sins and sin.

What, not betwixt the sins we commit, and that sinful, fallen nature, the carnal mind, that commits, or leads us to commit, them? Well, you will find it is now not sins, but sin; that which entered this world by one man, Adam, and thus death passed upon all men. Read the argument: do you notice that though much has come in by Adam the first, MUCH MORE has come in for those in Christ, by Christ, the second Head?

If sin and death come in by Adam, life eternal and ever-subsisting righteousness have come in by Christ. Now, let the eye again rest on Christ, but Christ raised from amongst the dead. The Eternal One passed through death for us, to be the beginning of the new creation of God. Thus we are justified and have eternal life; and the life communicated to us is beyond death, in ever-subsisting, accomplished righteousness. Now then, all here is divine perfection again. Can there be a more perfect, or a higher, christian life than this risen life—a resurrection and eternal life? And this is the life of every true Christian passed from death unto life. Look up at the highest and the Holy One, the risen Christ, at God's right hand; the life there is your life. Can there be a higher life than the highest? Then He was raised from the dead to be our righteousness; "upon them that believe"—and always upon them—always their righteousness—always the same. I challenge the answer: can there be a more perfect righteousness? Can there be a better robe, can there, I ask, be a better than the best? What an unfolding of divine perfection there is in all this!

Hold a minute, I am a little alarmed. If one sacrifice, because perfect, has perfectly put away all our sins; and if we are for ever righteous, in Christ; would not this lead to carelessness, to antinomianism, in fact? Let us continue in sin.

Now, if you read chapter vi., this is the very question taken up.

I am glad you will look at that chapter. I have heard so much about it, and I do not exactly understand what is said. It seems as if some had attained to something like this, the death of the old man. That is the complete destruction of sin

in them, so that the old man is somehow made pure by faith. Does it describe a state of attained purity? and is it true of some Christians, and not true of others?

Let us look at it. The object is to shew the great folly of supposing that grace teaches that we may continue in sin. God forbid, or far be the thought; not only the act, but far be the thought, of continuing in sin. One thing we ought to know—that so many of us as were baptized into, or unto, Christ, were baptized unto His death. But do we all know this now? That as many as were Christians then, took the very place of death, to sin, with Christ, as symbolized by burial in baptism? Do dead persons continue in sin? But that is the very place we have taken: Dead with Christ; risen with Christ. In death old things passed away; in Christ risen all are new. All Christians ought to know this—“That our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Now, who crucified the old man? and have some crucified the old man, and others have not?

And when was the old man crucified? Clearly this is not an act of faith; it was God who thus judged my sin, my old carnal man, in the person of the adorable substitute. “He was made sin for us.” Now, when we believe, faith identifies us with all this. We accept the judgment of God, not only on our sins, but on ourselves, and we shew this by the outward act of baptism.

But beware of setting aside the cross, and making the whole thing some act of our own. On the cross we see the just judgment of God on our proud, sinful self. There “I am crucified with Christ;” and thus accepting the crucifixion, we

justify God. And if we have thus accepted this place of death to sin, we have in that sense crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts. Shall we, then, walk in them? Far be the thought.

It is a precious chapter—do not read it lightly or carelessly, and do not forget it is the *standing* of every Christian. He may not understand it; but it is of all importance for a holy walk that we should understand it. Ponder over each sentence. But is it our actual state that is my question? Oh, certainly not, or why should we read, “Likewise *reckon* ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord?” When we see the Lord, and are, as to our glorified state, actually like Him, in sinless humanity, we shall not then *reckon* ourselves, but we shall really be so.

Then you cannot say that the believer is pure within, and has no sin as to his state?

How can I, when I read immediately, “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body,” &c.? (Ver. 12—14.) If the believer were pure, without sin, there would just be no meaning in these exhortations. It is a sad modern mistake to suppose that our old carnal nature is ever purified from sin, by any means. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The doctrine of the two natures is a truth of great importance. The old is never changed or improved; before God it is judged on the cross, and buried in the sepulchre of Christ. And thus our standing is wholly as risen in Christ.

Then I suppose you would say that the hopeless struggles of Romans vii. is true christian experience?

Indeed I should not.

What is it, then ; the experience of an unregenerate person ?

No ; for in that case it would make an unregenerate person delight in the law of God.

What is it, then ?

It is the hopeless struggles of a quickened soul under the law, and a sense of responsibility to keep it ; yea, earnestly desiring to keep it ; but having no power. I have often been struck with the fact, that it is placed so far on in the epistle. Forgiveness and justification may be known before its solemn lessons are learnt.

But if it is not christian experience, why are so many Christians in it ?

Because so many Christians are under law, as if in the flesh, vainly hoping to be able to keep it. Where the experience is deep and real, it is of great use to the soul when deliverance comes. But we must learn our utter helplessness. It is the claims of the law on one powerless. It is doing the things I hate. There is no help for the wretched man that I am. But there is deliverance when I know and own the deliverance from the law by the body of Christ, being dead to that wherein I was held. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But then, when full deliverance comes in Christ, is the flesh any better ? The old "I," my old nature ? Not in the least ; for after deliverance these words are given : "So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Now, why do these words come after deliverance ? Lest we should suppose there is any inward purity of the old nature. I can reckon it dead ; but I must ever walk in the fear of the Lord ; for

if the flesh acts, even in the most delivered saint, it is sin; and if it does not act, it is still flesh. But, alas! we all fail, though we should not; so that, if we who are delivered say we are without sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Well, then, there must be condemnation!

No; that is just what there is not, to them that are in Christ Jesus. Let us read the words very slowly: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is the standing of every Christian; could it be more perfect?

But stop; how can this be, if the old nature is sin?

Well, it is; is it not? or how could it lust? It must be sin, for the moment it acts there are sins.

How, then, can there be no condemnation?

I know under law this simply could not be. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (or by a sacrifice for sin) CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH."

I now see clearly how there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus; for all has been condemned on the cross; both sins and sin. And if all has been condemned in Him, there is nothing to condemn that has not been so already.

Oh, the deliverance this gives to the soul. As to the standing of the man in Christ it is absolutely perfect, there is nothing to condemn.

What, not my sins?

No, they have been perfectly judged, on the holy substitute, the Son of God.

What, not sin in the flesh?

No, it is judged too. Dead with Christ; risen

with Christ ; no condemnation in Christ. This is christian perfection.

But what then as to *the state* of a believer ; what is the provision, or power for a holy life or walk ?

“ The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” One thing is thus certain, if you are in Christ, Christ is in you. In the flesh you have no power, but in Christ ; and Christ in us, gives all power. It does not say free from sin, but free from the law of sin and death. The law of sin led me captive, I was powerless. But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus gives me infinite power. Yea, it is the very law of this Spirit to give victory.

Read verses 8-14. Is not this most important ? The certainty that the Holy Ghost dwells in us gives not only present power for holiness, but though the body is still under the sentence of death, because of sin, yet the resurrection of the body is sure. And mark, all this is not the attainment of some, but true of all the children of God. “ Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.”

But if I have still a sinful old nature, can the Spirit of Christ dwell in me ? I thought the Holy Spirit could not dwell in me unless there was absolute purity from sin.

If this were the case, how could He dwell in any except the holy Son of God, who is sinless ? But we are told, “ the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary, the one to the other ; so that ye may not do the things that ye would.” You could not apply these words as to the state of Christ.

But they are applied to believers. These con-

trary things are found in the same person, and in every child of God; so that as to our state, we are not like Christ, in sinless purity. We shall be when we see Him. Then we shall be like Him. Oh blessed hope! "And he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." It does not say, "is pure as he is pure," but "*purifieth himself.*" All scripture is consistent with itself. But error is never consistent with scripture. There is no scripture for the thought, that some believers have attained to a state of purity, as Christ is pure.

I feel great difficulty in seeing that the Holy Ghost can dwell where there is a sinful nature. I thought that nature had to be gradually or suddenly changed into a holy nature, before the Holy Spirit could have anything to say to us.

Then am I to gradually change my sinful nature, and make a fit abode for the Spirit? I have heard something like this. I must make a vacuum, and He will come and fill it; but where is that in scripture?

You will find if you turn once more to Hebrews x. 14, 15, that the Holy Ghost is not a witness of the purity of our old nature, but of the infinite value of the blood of Jesus. In the cleansing of the leper there was a striking type of this in Leviticus xiii. 12-17. The blood was put upon the leper, and the oil was put upon the blood. So our sins and sin having been judged in Christ, God does not impute them to us. He does not see in that sense our sins. He sees the blood, and when He sees the blood, the Holy Spirit can and does dwell in us, and shall abide with us unto the end. I know this is a serious truth, but it is the truth, the only truth. For if it be possible for you not

to have the Spirit of Christ, at any time, then you would be none of His.

I fear this would lead to great carelessness and unholiness.

It is the opposite of this; it is the great power of and for a holy life. The apostle so uses it when the saints at Corinth were in danger of falling into dreadful sin. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?" This leaves us without excuse. We have no need ever to be overcome of sin, for we have the command of infinite power, the Holy Ghost evermore dwelling in us. "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Oh child of God, your vows, and promises, and efforts, are all vain. If on this ground, trusting to poor flesh, I know sin will have the victory over you, sooner or later. Now let Christ have the full glory of deliverance. The difference is so great, you will never conquer until you find you cannot fight. Lay hold of these two facts; all your sins, and sin, have been judged on the cross. God sees the value of that blood. And now at all times, and in all places, the Holy Spirit dwells in you. Walk in this consciousness, believe them, as blessed facts; for facts they are, if you are His.

Now what becomes you as a temple of the Holy Ghost? How often have you felt disturbed, and miserable, and you could not tell why. Ah, you have grieved "the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

This is very often the case, when least suspected, in these degenerate days of worldliness. You will know practical holiness just in proportion as you are led by the Spirit. "For as many as are

led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.) The Holy Spirit will not lead you into the circles of that world, which has rejected, and hates, the Son of God. All, all, of that world must be given up. Oh, let it not be in talk, but let us now, in simple dependence on the Holy Ghost, seek only to do the will of God. And if you thus walk in the Spirit, there may be much that is of the fleshly will of man to give up. But is not the Spirit putting it into your hearts, as you read this paper, to long for more entire consecration to God, or to be men of God, walking in the power of the Holy Ghost! What do you see around, but hollow profession? The house of God turned into shameful merchandise; the form of godliness but the power denied. Oh, awake, awake.

Before I close, will you bear with me a little longer? I want you to see how distinct the standing and the state are kept in Ephesians.

In chapters i. and ii. we have the absolute perfect standing of the believer in Christ. In chapter iii., the prayer for the state of the Christian. Now read these verses; you cannot pray for the things that are yours.

Chapter i., oh how we are blest in verse 3, "*in Christ;*" with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. Chosen in Him, to be holy, and without blame before Him in love—adopted children—He hath made us accepted "*in the beloved,*" "*in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.*" Oh, my soul, what food for holy meditation! Oh, let us go on unto perfection, even to Christ raised from among the dead, set at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Oh, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints: and all this is ours. For God "*hath raised us up*

together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We cannot go further as to christian standing; it is the same as Christ, our Head in heaven. *It is christian perfection.* We cannot pray for this: we may pray for one another that we may *know* this perfection in Christ in the heavens. All is ours. Oh, praise the Lord.

But this the apostle does pray for as to the *state* of these believers, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," &c. Oh, is not this a blessed state? Christ *dwelling* in our hearts by faith. And then mark the great variety of exhortations that follow, all of which have to do with our state, and must not be set aside.

Thus in Ephesians it is first our standing in Christ, then Christ in us. "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.*" But does this prove perfection in ourselves; or any change or improvement of the old nature? Indeed not, for every exhortation in the remaining chapters shews the greatest need of watchfulness, against our old carnal nature. Thus I find a perfect standing in Christ, but no intimation of perfection or purity of state. What! then am I to sink down into a careless continuing in sin, or to practise sin? If I have still an evil old nature, am I to be a slave to its lusts? By no means. If I know the power that worketh in us to be infinite—even the power of God, then surely I may count on deliverance.

If we were in a state of purity, we should not need these precepts and exhortations. God knows we need them every one. When we shall for ever

be in the same state of purity as our blessed Lord, do you think we shall need then to be told to "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths;" "and be not drunk with wine?" Can we then be told to "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption?" Can these things be said to Christ? Then if we were now pure as He is pure, they could not be said to us. No corrupt communication can proceed from Him. He is purity itself. I am waiting for the blessed change: when we see Him we shall be like Him, and "he that hath this hope purifieth himself as he is pure." He is the standard. But can we say in this state now that nothing impure can proceed from us? If we did, our own mouths would condemn us. Oh, let us be watchful, and ever seek to abide in lowly dependence on God.

We will now briefly notice these two points in Philippians. Here the apostle lays aside everything that he may be found in Christ. All that he was as a pious, devoted Jew must be counted dung, and he did count it loss, just to be found *in* Christ, not leaning on his own righteousness. And true christian experience is shewn to be this, "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings; being made conformable unto his death." Now I ask you, is this our experience. To talk about ourselves. To write about ourselves. This is not *to know Him*. If you would grow in practical holiness, this will never be by being occupied with yourself. You must read the word more, forget yourself, in being occupied with Him. Are we walking, and seeking more and more to walk as dead persons, but risen with Christ? Do we know anything of the power of His resurrection? Not an atom of worldly place

or distinction is consistent with this true christian experience. Yet if our walk in this day was like the experience here described, then surely we could not pretend to perfection as to our state. For the apostle, looking forward to that blessed moment when he shall be actually raised, or changed, into the full resurrection state of purity, says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (or from among the dead.) Anyhow I only look for that, by whatever path of suffering, or loss, that is my only desire and object. Not that he had attained to this state, or, as to his state of purity, was already perfect. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." The idea of present perfection and purity destroys the whole force of this scripture. Not that the apostle could possibly question his perfection *in* Christ as to standing. Indeed he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

What has pained me, in trying to read recent writings on holiness, is the almost entire absence of shewing all believers their absolutely perfect standing in Christ, and the putting in its place a supposed kind of purity, or perfection of state, attainable here; and thus setting aside the blessed hope of the Lord's coming, and also the full value of the one offering of Christ. If you take up any work on this subject, you will detect these two things. I am grieved it is so, and I am sure it will work great harm to souls. For if we do not know our perfect standing, how can we have peace? And if we are not waiting for the Lord, as Saviour, from heaven, in the blessed certainty that when we see Him we shall be like Him, we thus lose the sanctifying power of that blessed hope.

I rejoice with all my heart in the awakening and

wide-spread desire after more devoted holiness of life and walk, and I earnestly entreat my readers again to remember the power we have in Christ, and Christ in us. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," or, "I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power." (Phil. iv. 13.) So that he could say, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." Philippians i. 20.

I merely point out the same perfect standing in Christ in Colossians, and then also exhortations for the same holy walk. Have you ever thought these words are true of, not some, but all the children of God? "Giving thanks unto the Father which *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who *hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. i. 12-14.) And again, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." (Chap. ii. 9.) Have you weighed every word that thus describes the perfect standing of every believer? Yes, of *you*, if you have passed from death unto life. Read John v. 24, and you will find every exhortation to a holy walk in keeping with this your perfect standing in Christ. "If ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above."

And oh the certainty that "When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth," &c. Now shall we have any such members to mortify when we are pure as He is pure? Plainly not. Then we are not here on earth pure as He is pure. If you

vainly think you are, the result will be, you will fail to mortify your members ; and in the end fall into sins again ; and then Satan will get great advantage over you—if he has not already.

If this should meet the eye of any, who, whilst professing holiness, have been overcome, oh, let me beg of you to go to your Father, and confess your sin. Beware of going on one step farther in hypocrisy. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just in forgiving our sins, and in cleansing us from all unrighteousness.”

Then may we not look for purity of heart, entire purification from a sinful nature ?

Oh yes, and earnestly long for it, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I thought I had heard such words as these : “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, body, soul, and spirit.”

You may have so heard ; but you have not so read. Turn to 1 Thessalonians v. 23, and now let us read carefully. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly : and, I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now you observe here is entire sanctification to God ; and yet we need entire preservation. If spirit, and soul, and body were sanctified in the sense of being made pure as Christ is pure, then there would be no need of being *preserved* blameless. Does Christ thus need to be preserved ? If He were on earth would He thus need it ?

Then what do these words mean ?

The very God of peace is so to fill the mind, so to command us, that we shall be wholly separated from the very appearance of evil ; wholly sanctified to God.

But if there be still an old evil nature, called the flesh, how can we be truly consecrated to God in holiness ?

That evil nature, sin in the flesh, has been condemned, not sanctified ; and we have the prayer that spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most clearly implying, that until He comes for whom we wait, we shall need preserving, spirit, and soul and body.

But what is the difference from the way I had heard this text quoted ?

All the difference possible. You had heard it as if it meant that spirit, and soul, and body might be made pure ; whereas it is that they might be preserved blameless.

Thus may we be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. And thus may deliverance and victory be our portion now, even as purity in all its above perfection shall be then ; and oh, how soon ! If we so long for it here, what will it be to be there ? To hear that sweet voice ; to gaze on that lovely face ; the smile of His welcome ; the glory of God shining in that face ! and no fear ; for we shall be like Him. "The glory that thou hast given me I have given them."

Oh, go ye out to meet Him. As Rebecca left her mother's home of idolatry to go to Isaac, so may we leave an ungodly world to meet our precious Lord. Wilt thou go ?

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NEHEMIAH:

OR,

THE BUILDING OF THE WALL.

“Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God?” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” In that fear, desiring to know and do the will of God; let us look at the lessons in Nehemiah, written for our instruction. If we study this book in the presence of the Lord, we shall hear Him speaking to us in it, as to present events.

IN chapter i. we see a man before God. He learns the state of the remnant of the Jews, and that the wall of Jerusalem is broken down. He bows in confession and prayer. Deeply earnest is this man of God, as he pleads with Jehovah for the state of the fallen, yet the redeemed by power. Thus he pleads: “O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name.” (Chap. i. 11.)

Thus we see him before the Lord, feeling acutely the state of Israel and the city of the Great King. He owns fully their deep sin in departing from the Lord: “We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments which thou commandest thy servant Moses.”

Now, as these things were written as types for

us, may I ask, Have we been thus before the Lord, in deep confession, as to the present state of the church of God? Have we thus wept, and mourned, and prayed, for the blood-bought people of the Lord in this day?

Let us seek no mere controversy, but sit down before the Lord, and compare the present captivity of the church in the world with what it was in the beginning. Has not the wall been broken down? When God by the Holy Ghost first built the church, there was the wall of separation. All believers were together, and formed one body, as all the houses in the ancient city formed the one Jerusalem, with its wall strong and high. Even so we read of the one church of God, "and of the rest durst no man join himself to them." (Acts v. 13.) Have you sat down before the Lord? Look, then, back along the dark ages, the centuries of captivity, wherein this wall of separation has been broken down.

As God prepared Nehemiah, by this deep exercise of heart in His own presence, for his future work, so has God been pleased in like manner to raise up servants, prepared by Himself, for special work. But there must be this process of heart-preparation. I would not write another word for controversy, but there are many souls bowed down at the thought of what calls itself the church; God will use these thoughts for their help, and, I trust, for His own glory.

After deep prostration and exercise before God, in chapter i., we find as the result, divine yearnings and activities of love for the welfare of the people of God in chapter ii.

All this brings before us for the first time Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the

Ammonite. Now, as these and their companions are brought before us throughout this book as the enemies and opposers of Nehemiah, and his work for God in building the wall, it is important to know who they were, and whom they represent. They were, then, Horonites, Ammonites, and Arabians. But they were dwelling in the land of Israel in chapter iv. 2: Sanballat spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria; and Samaria in the beginning formed part of the land of Israel—they were active, boastful, subtle, men of authority in the land, but not of it. Do they not, then, represent the active, boastful, subtle men of authority who are in the professing church, but who are really strangers to God, and not of the church at all, but are the enemies and opposers of those desirous of carrying on the work of God, in caring for the saints, and in building the wall of separation to God?

If we now turn to the history of these men, we shall find seven forms or aspects of enmity to God's work. "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, heard, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." (Chap. ii. 10.) And when has God raised up a man in like manner, to seek the real welfare of the church of God, but those have been found—and not a few of them—who have been grieved exceedingly? How great was the grief of the clergy when God raised up a Wiclif, a Huss, or a Luther! But especially do we find these seven marks of opposition to the work of God during this last half century. What a grief it has been to many, that God should have raised up men to seek the real welfare of the church of God, apart from all sectarianism.

Some years ago men were brought, like Nehemiah, on their faces before the Lord. Amazed at the departure of the church from the commandments of her Lord, they were bowed in confession and prayer. And the Holy Ghost put earnest yearnings in their hearts for the one church of God.

Philadelphia (Rev. iii.) answers to Nehemiah, as antitype answers to type. One must be alone a good deal with God to understand this. There were but few men with Nehemiah when he arose in the night, and no man knew what God had put into his heart. Just take a ride with him around Jerusalem. Dragon wall and dung port wall broken down, &c. Such are the things you will find in and around the church in ruins. That is the church as seen in the hands of men.

Very clearly have the scriptures foretold all this. The present state of Christendom is most accurately described in the word (see 2 Tim. iii.; 2 Pet. ii. 1—9; culminating in Rev. xvii., xviii.). Its progress is marked in detail in its seven stages in Revelation ii., iii. Neither is there one intimation that it would be restored to its primitive glory as the bright witness of a rejected Christ. A feeble remnant is found in Philadelphia, clinging to the person and word of Christ, and keeping His patience.

As Nehemiah, then, rode round Jerusalem (chap. ii. 11—16), so ride around Christendom. Oh, I ask you to reflect, what are God's thoughts about Romanism and Protestantism? View the whole scene in the presence of God and in His fear. Did Nehemiah hang down his hands in despair? No! he said, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem." Thus he encourages them, and

the hand of God was good upon him. They reply, "Let us rise up and build."

This brings us to the second form of opposition. "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?" The first form of opposition was grief; the second is *laughter*. Compared with the whole nation, they were indeed a feeble remnant.

They longed to see the sacred city enclosed within the wall of separation. And shall that city of the king be more dear to them than the sacred enclosure of the saints of God, around the person of Christ, be to us? As Nehemiah stirred up the remnant to build the wall, so has the Holy Ghost stirred up a few, each in his place, to build this wall, so long cast down. Oh, how the modern Sanballats have laughed and despised! What is this thing that you feeble, silly, Christians will do? Yes, there has been a time for grief, and a time of laughter.

In chapter iii. the wall is being built. Each little company is in its place building the wall. Is not this a striking picture of what has taken place in these last days? Wherever the truth of the one body of Christ—the one church of God—has been accepted in the fear of the Lord, each little company has acted upon it, in building the wall of separation; and the divine Architect has made each piece fit, like the well-worked courses of masonry. The work is of God; His good hand is with the feeble remnant.

It may be called "exclusive"—it *must* be so. You cannot build a wall, but it must be an exclusive wall. Why set up its doors and bars, if not to

preserve and exclude? We cannot sincerely receive the blessed truth of the one body, but this must exclude all sectarianism. Can we accept the truth of one God, and then tolerate the other gods of the heathen? No more can we accept the truth of the one body of Christ, and accept the many bodies of Christians!

This brings us to the *third* form of opposition, chapter iv.

“But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.” Thus we have had grief, then laughter—now the building of the wall is a fact, there is *wrath*. Is not this picture also sadly fulfilled before our very eyes? Sanballat’s wrath against the builders of this wall was not more bitter, than the bitter hatred against the sacred enclosure of souls being really gathered to Christ, the true centre. What! say they, not tolerate our denominations? What, exclude all that does not seek uncompromising conformity to Christ?

Sanballat spake to his brethren and the army of Samaria, “What do these feeble Jews?” And indeed what were they, compared with the army of Samaria? “What do these feeble Christians?” Ah, indeed, what are they, compared to the armies of Christendom around? Are they going to remove the heaps of rubbish? Are they going to level sectarianism in a day?

This wrath is succeeded by the *fourth* form of opposition. Sanballat *mocked* the Jews. “Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.” Thus the enemy, whilst hating with bitter hatred the

work of God, outwardly appears to make light of and mock at it. Is not this exactly so in our day? Well, there may be grief, laughter, wrath, and mocking; but the work goes on. The wall is growing fast—piece is joined to piece. The work of God spreads. In Ireland, England, the Continent, America, India, Syria, souls are hearing the voice of the Shepherd, and leaving every fold of man—are being gathered within the sacred enclosure, around the precious person of the Great Shepherd, Christ Himself. Christ is exalted, and all that does not exalt Him is excluded. Man is nothing.

Now, what will Sanballat and his company do? This brings us to the *fifth* form of opposition. “But it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.” (Chap. iv. 7, 8.) We have had grief, laughter, wrath, mocking; now there is to be *fighting*—determined, uncompromising opposition to the work of God.

Is it not even so? Has not every sect in Christendom agreed in this, to fight against, to oppose, the building any further of the wall of separation to Christ? And as these companies consulted to come upon the Jews unawares, so often, when God has been blessing His word in a given place, has the enemy come unawares, sowing evil reports, and sought to stop the work. Behind the scene are wicked spirits in the heavenlies. Surely we need the whole armour of God, and “our God shall fight for us.” The work at Jerusalem still went on; so it is now; the more opposition, the

more it drives to God, and the more the work goes on. The trumpet of truth is heard to give a certain sound, and the saints resort thither unto it.

Chapter v. is very solemn. There was failure amongst the remnant. As Peter said, and well he knew it, "We are men of like passions with yourselves:" and surely we also know it. Are we better than others in ourselves? Far be the thought. But, oh, the grace that has gathered to that blessed One, to whom no man can come except the Father draw him. As our Lord said: "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John vi. 44.) The Father is not gathering souls to poor failing man, but to His own Son.

Men have formed themselves into the churches of Rome, England, Scotland, and innumerable bodies; but God by His Spirit has restored the long-lost truth of the one body of Christ—Christ the only true centre. It is now an accomplished fact, that the wall of separation from every human society is being built. Souls are gathered on the same basis as at Pentecost, though in themselves but a feeble remnant out of the camp of Christendom. There is the camp of a leavened Christendom, and there is the sacred enclosure outside that camp, gathered to Christ, and bearing His reproach.

This just brings us to the *sixth* form of opposition—what Sanballat and his companions did when they heard that Nehemiah had built the wall. "Then Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief."

Then Nehemiah "sent messengers unto them,

saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down unto you?" (Chap. vi. 3.)

We have had five forms of opposition—grief, laughter, wrath, mocking, and fighting; now we have *subtlety without*. It is as if they said, Do not be so narrow and exclusive. Do come down from your sacred enclosure to "one of the villages in the plain of Ono." "Let us meet together." Do come down, and sanction us in the plain of Ono. Do you ask, what was this plain of Ono? Turn to chapter xi. 35, "Zod and Ono, the *valley of craftsmen*." Do leave the only centre of worship within those walls of Jerusalem, and come down to any one of the villages of "the craftsmen." Well did they know that if the true worship of God was set up within that divine enclosure, they would feel like the Ephesians in after times, that their craft was in danger. "Sirs," said the men of Ephesus, "ye know by this craft we have our wealth." (Acts xix. 23—41.)

Thus we have the camp of Samaria, with its villages of craftsmen, on the one side—open, compromising, liberal—willing to meet all, and take counsel with all together; on the other side a few feeble Jews, gathered in separation on God's ground, within the hated exclusive walls. And through the help of God they stand firm, and act as those who know they are just where God would have them to be, and doing that which is pleasing in His sight.

It was not one effort, or two, but four times did Sanballat send messengers after this sort, to induce, if possible, the servants of God to give up their exclusiveness, and come down from their excellency to the low level of the plain of Ono, the vil-

lages of the craftsmen. Still God preserved him —“I answered them after the same manner.” (Ver. 4.) To Nehemiah it was a great work to be uncompromisingly for God.

Sanballat, judging after his own heart, now sends the fifth time his servant, with an open letter in his hand: “therein was written, it is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu [or Geshem] saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel, for which cause thou thinkest to build the wall, that thou thinkest to be their king, according to these words. . . . Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.” Very firm was the reply, so like a man that walks in peace with God: “There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.” If Nehemiah had been acting in the pride of a self-seeking heart, then nothing could be more narrow, close, yea, contemptible; but he was acting in the fear of Jehovah, and nothing could be more beautiful and faithful.

Is not all this a picture of the movements around us in this very day? Nothing could be more strikingly so. There is the sacred enclosure of a few feeble saints, gathered to Christ, and there is the great camp of the Greek, Roman, and Protestant churches. And as there were many Jews still in captivity, so are there many Christians in this great camp of Babylon. But is it not written, “There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of,

and through covetousness shall they with *feigned words* make merchandise of you?" (2 Pet. ii. 1.).

Is not this terrible picture fulfilled before our very eyes? and is not this merchandise wicked in God's sight, though one of the most respectable professions of this day? So fashionable is it that many of God's own children are entangled in it, and follow its pernicious ways. If you would read a further description of this modern camp of Samaria, read 2 Timothy iii.

God in His sovereign grace has been working in this camp, and many souls, we trust, have been saved. He can work in Greece, in Babylon, or Rome. Satan has used this circumstance, like Sanballat of old, and repeated have been the temptations to come down to some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. Only give up your narrow, illiberal exclusiveness, and come down to the level of the craftsmen; only acknowledge the clergy, and you may hold what you like. Do only come down from that hateful wall around the true ground of God; or, if you will not come down and acknowledge us, then you are but a sect in Jerusalem, as much as we are. You are the exclusives. Come down now; come, let us take counsel together.

Those who are separated to Christ can say, All this is feigned out of your own hearts. You know we are no sect. You know that we do not exclude any one that God has gathered to Christ, and who only seeks His honour and glory. Is it not a solemn thing to oppose the present work of God, as Sanballat did of old?

"But," says an eminent evangelist, who remains in and approves the camp of Samaria, "will you not go with us to the preachings?"

“I don't know that I will,” said a young Scotch Christian.

“What, will you not go where God is working?”

“No, I do not know that I will.”

“How is that?”

“Why, God is a sovereign; but I am a subject.”

The same evangelist said to another (the servant of the Lord with whom he had first laboured in England), “I am sorry you are not with us.”

“Indeed, I am more happy to be with the Lord.”

“Why, is He not with us?”

“That may be in His grace, and I pray He may use you much; but you know you are not with Him outside the camp.”

No, we cannot be with the army of Samaria, and at the same time with the few within the sacred enclosure of the rebuilt wall. “Let us go forth, therefore, UNTO HIM without the camp, bearing his reproach.” (Heb. xiii. 13.)

There is the sacred enclosure of the feeble ones in Philadelphia (Rev. iii.), those who have gone forth from Sardis (Protestantism), unto Him, the holy and the true. And there is the boasting camp of Laodicea, outside of which the precious Lord knocks at the door. Are you, my reader, in the camp of Laodicea, that which is rich, with its thousands and its clergy? Then you have never yet gone forth unto Him, bearing His reproach. May God by His Holy Spirit make this clear to you. How could the gathered saints to Christ, outside the camp, come down and sanction the craftsmen in the valley of Ono? No; surely twenty thousand on the plain of Ono should not attract my soul from Christ.

It is a great work that God is doing by the Holy Ghost, greater far than the work He did by Nehemiah. And the enclosed remnant in Jerusalem were not more distinct from the camp of Samaria than the souls gathered to Christ are distinct from the camp of Christendom. Oh, that they who have been thus gathered were more true to Christ. They have failed, but they cannot give up the only true ground of gathering around Him. They own their failure, but they cannot give up Christ.

This brings us to the *seventh* form of opposition to the work of God—*danger within*. This will illustrate the cunning subtlety of Satan. In the last case it was the temptation from without to go down to the platform of Ono—to compromise all that God has taught us, and sanction the craftsmen and merchandise of Christendom. Now the mischief is within. We shall do well carefully to consider it.

Sanballat does not appear on the surface. “Afterwards I came unto the house of Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple: and let us shut the doors of the temple, for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.” Does not this look very plausible? Surely it is right to meet together in the house of God. But to shut the doors of the temple would be with us to put the light under a bushel. The temptation is to give up the testimony. If we will not join the religious activities of the camp, then let us seek in shut-up selfishness, and fear of man, to enjoy that sacred place of blessing and communion among ourselves, and take care of ourselves.

The opposition may indeed become more grave. But shall we give up the testimony, if it be even to

save our lives? or shall we flee? Shall we through fear shut ourselves up? Is this the mind of God? "And lo I perceived," said Nehemiah, "that God had not sent him Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him." Let us also, then, having this certainty that the work is of God, not be weary, or shrink from it.

It seems to me the greatest trial and danger was from false brethren. The enemy knew that the wall was built: "They were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God." (Chap. vi. 16.) But the false brethren, even "nobles of Judah, sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him," &c. This is indeed sad, and a great trial, when those who outwardly take the place of being gathered to Christ, yet like these mixed marriages of Judah, we find some dear brethren in the Lord seeking to mingle the principles of the camp with those of God. Nor should this surprise us, remembering the words of the apostle, "Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things." (Read Acts xx. 29—35.) No doubt these half-and-half brethren are the greatest stumbling-blocks in the way of inquiring souls. Let those gathered to Christ beware of evil associations—the greatest present danger.

Thus we have very briefly examined the seven stages of opposition to God's own work. The grief of the enemy (chap. ii. 10); the laughter of the enemy (ii. 19); his wrath (iv. 1); mocking (iv. 3); fighting (iv. 8); subtlety without (v. 1—9); subtlety and danger within (vi. 10). And many a reader of this tract will say, "I have seen all seven in the opposition to God's work in our own day."

So the wall was finished. No amount of opposition could stay the work of God. It is so again—saints are gathered to Christ, the wall is built; the doors are set up, and God has raised up faithful men to keep the watch. The position has been assailed in sevenfold opposition; but God has preserved the sacred principle of being gathered to Christ. To Him be all praise! Surely we need to put on the whole armour of God. Our Sannaballat is not dead, though his power is destroyed. These seven aspects, that is complete opposition, will continue until the coming of our Lord.

Some one now may say, If God has gathered souls to Christ as at the beginning, and if they find that the truth of the church of God being one, excludes every sect of men—yet, if this basis was large enough at the first to receive every obedient child of God—surely, then, it must be as broad, and be large enough now. Is it not a wonderful truth, that all believers form the one body of Christ—all are one? “There is one body.” And then if Christ has His place in the administration of the church, its gifts, and its worship in spirit, as at first, surely this is a large place to dwell in! Is it not large enough for every Christian on earth who desires to walk in the fear of the Lord, and according to His word? When this truth is known, what need for all the sects that men have made? Surely no need. Then tell me, if the place is so large and so blessed, how is it that there are so few in it? Why, in some towns, there are none gathered thus to Christ, and in others, those thus gathered are in no reputation.

This was the case also at Jerusalem. “Now the city was large and great; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.” Yes,

this is the very question of chapter vii. Compared with the largeness of the city, there were but few in it; but the number was known, and left on record, of those who had come up out of the captivity (vers. 6—60). But there were a great number which went up “from Telmelah, Telharsa, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not shew their father’s house, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel.” Many others also are named: “These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they as polluted put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha (or governor) said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim.” (Vers. 61—65.)

All this is exceedingly instructive. If mingling with the Gentile world had caused the Israelites to lose the certainty of their nationality, is there any wonder that the effect of the church being mixed with the world should have caused so many to be uncertain, whether they are the saved children of God or not? Even with the most evangelical there is much darkness and perplexity as to this. And this is one cause, if not the chief one, why so few take the happy place of the children of God gathered to Christ. Evidently there were many Israelites who could not shew their genealogy; and there are many Christians who cannot shew it; they are so confused with the false position they are in, that they cannot tell whether their names are written in heaven or not. Indeed, in human churches this is not an essential point. Until lately, many denied the possibility of any knowing with certainty that they are the children of God.

Is it not also most true, that if we do not know

this, we cannot eat of the most holy things? We must know Jesus, the Great High Priest in the presence of God—He who once bore our sins on the cross, but who is now crowned with glory. As our righteousness, raised from the dead, we now see Him, with Urim and Thummim. In His face shine the lights [Urim] and perfections [Thummim] of God. How can you enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus if you are uncertain whether you are saved? Oh, search the register; never rest, my reader, until this first question is solved.

Reader, ask yourself, Is my name written in heaven? How do I know that *my* very sins are all for ever blotted out? Is it true that God in very deed is my Justifier? What, shall nothing ever separate *me* from His love in Christ? If I die, am I quite sure it will be to depart and be with Christ? If I live until the Lord comes, am I quite certain that He will take me to be for ever with Himself? Reader, you will never answer these solemn questions by looking within, at self, at feelings, or experiences. No, it must be the look of faith at the One who has been lifted up, and is now at the right hand of God. And, mark, I rarely ever met a soul yet that enjoyed this blessed certainty—that truly had peace with God—that could comfortably remain in the camp of Christendom away from Christ in rejection. Now is it not so? Do you not feel it far more consistent, if in uncertainty, to remain in the systems of men, rather than take a place outside the camp, bearing the present reproach of Christ? I have no doubt this will soon be the real condition of the recent converts. Left in the camp, the uncertainty of the camp will fall upon them. The remnant were few in number, and feeble indeed; and so of those

gathered to Christ in this day. But the one was the work of God, and so is the other.

We now come to another very interesting inquiry. And again, as of them, so it is of us. If they were neither to come down from the enclosure of those exclusive walls, and mingle with the craftsmen, nor yet to shut themselves up, what were they to do? If we are not to come down from that blessed place our God has restored to us—the ground of the one body, and the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost—if we are not to compromise God's blessed truth by a truce with the clergy; and what is of man in the movements of the act; and, on the other hand, if we are not to shut ourselves up—then pray what are we to do?

Chapter viii. is an answer to this inquiry. The people are gathered together as one man. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation. Oh, what reading of the book before both men and women, and those that could understand; and what attention to the book! *The book, God's book.* And Ezra opened the book. And now what blessing and worship! and what causing the people to understand the book! “So they read the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” (Ver. 8.)

This, my brethren, is the work of those separated to Christ, and this is what they have to do. Remember how little real regard there is in the camp for the word of God. It must be far otherwise with them. They must be men of “the book.” They must open the book; read the book distinctly; make the people understand the book. It is God speaking to us. Then there will be lifting up of hands, and bowing of heads, and

worshipping the Lord with faces to the ground. Yes, as the Tirshatha, which is the Holy Ghost, gives us understanding of the precious word, there will be intelligent delight in the Lord; we joy in God.

But is it to be all for ourselves? Oh no. "Then he said, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Ver. 10.) And all the people did so, because they had understood the words.

It is a great mistake merely to seek our own personal blessing and edification. It is spiritual selfishness. We must be personal; *we* must feed on all the sweet perfections of Christ, that which the fat of the burnt-offering pointed to—the inmost thoughts and affections of our own precious Jesus; the loveliness of His walk here below; and His present unchanging love. Does not the sweet perfume of His adorable person fill the heaven of heavens? Oh, let us drink the sweet; let us be full of Christ! and then our happy work is to send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. O child of God, this is to be thy constant work, even to those who do not understand thee, yea, who slander thee, who misrepresent thee, and who speak all manner of evil of thee ignorantly. Do not return evil for evil, railing for railing, but contrariwise, seek the spiritual good of all; "send portions" to the whole church of God. Remember how the Lord met the mad persecutor, Saul of Tarsus. And not a few in our day who were bitter opponents, have been taught of the Father to come out of the camp to the Lord Jesus Christ, the true centre. Let what is pleasing to Him be pleasing

to us. "For the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Now we will notice one striking effect of reading the book, and understanding the words that were declared unto them. On the second day gathering (chap. viii. 13—18), they found what was written concerning the feast of tabernacles—"That the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month." "And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness." Is not this very remarkable? they were only a handful of people compared with Israel in the days of Solomon; yet this feast had never been so kept. This feast, Israel in booths, was a beautiful symbol of the people waiting for the millennial reign of their long-expected Messiah and Lord. And for a thousand years Israel had never so waited in booths, as this feeble remnant now waited with "very great gladness."

It is no less remarkable that the church had never kept the feast of tabernacles since the days of Paul, until God has in these our days gathered a feeble remnant outside the camp to Christ. This was the attitude of the church in the early days of Paul: "Turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven," &c. (1 Thess. i. 9; ii. 19; iii. 13; iv. 15—18. Read prayerfully these scriptures.) Must we not confess that for eighteen centuries we look in vain in what is called church history to find the church in this tabernacle feast again? No doubt there was a little of it during the sad days of per-

secution. But no sooner did the world cease to persecute, than the church immediately became worldly—in the world, and of the world. And whilst the Bridegroom tarried for so many centuries, the church slept.

Now what has taken place during these last years, since God has gathered a feeble remnant to Christ? Have not the scriptures had a similar place and effect to that described in our chapter? Has not the effect been the same? The blessed long-lost hope of the church has been restored, and an attitude answering to the feast of tabernacles has been once more taken. The gathered remnant have been led, by the Spirit of God, to wait for the Son from heaven; and there is very great gladness. The blessed certainty, that as it is appointed to men to die, and after death the judgment, so Christ was once offered for our sins; and we are now looking for Him without sin unto salvation. Yea, “we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (see Heb. ix. 27, 28; 1 John iii. 2), contrasted with the awful gloom of looking for a day of judgment, and the bar of God, about our sins. There is very great gladness; because we know that He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and it is our happy privilege now to be waiting for Him from heaven: O the untold joy of that triumphant moment! “Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

And as Israel were to publish and proclaim in all their cities what they found written; so surely would the Lord have us make known, with holy boldness, what we have found written. Intelligent communion with God and with one another, understanding the words of God which are written,

making all this known to the blood-bought church of God, and waiting for His Son from heaven—what could we have more?

Thus the wall was built. And all this great gladness more than made up for the hatred of men, and charges of exclusivism. I do not pursue this study much beyond the wall, but there is one thing I must notice.

Some of my readers may say, "Surely the result of all this would be self-complacency, conceit, pride. What, you, the only handful of people on the face of the earth on true ground—within God's sacred enclosure—around the only true centre? This must produce narrow-minded, self-satisfaction."

You are wrong; it does not. Read chapter ix. What a contrast to all human thought! "Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackcloth, and earth upon them." It might be thought that separation from others would produce a feeling of self-superiority. But no; it did not. The seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, "and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers." And then there is reading, confession, and worship. Ah, this is of God: it is the divine order. Separation from evil brings us into self-abhorrence before God. And the more we read His word, the more we have to confess; and, wondrous to tell, the more we confess, the more we worship. And then you find the Levites cry to God. Self-judgment produces dependence on God, and faith in God. "Stand up, and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name; which is exalted above all blessing and praise." Thus the Lord Jehovah is before their souls; whilst owning their

utter failure, and the failure of their fathers, yet throughout this chapter, God, in all that He had done and was to them, shines out in every verse.

All this is so true in every case where a soul is truly gathered to Christ. "Mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." I am sure the nearer we are to God, the more the flesh will be crushed, whether as individuals, or as saints gathered to the Lord. It is not what we are—no, we have sinned; but it is what God is, and what He has done for us. Surely deep, real humility becomes those who can say there is nothing betwixt our souls and the lake of fire but the blood of Christ. To Him be all glory and praise. He is worthy to bring His redeemed, without spot or wrinkle, to His own place prepared for them. "Let us," then, "go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

All this is surely truth for present guidance, and for testing. Where are you, reader? in the religious Babylon, afar off from God's true ground of gathering? or have you, like the remnant, been brought back to the ground of what the church was in the beginning? Have you been exercised before the Lord about the present condition of Christendom, as Nehemiah was about the holy city? Have you found any seeking alone the good of the church of God? Do you know anything of that sevenfold opposition to the present work of God? The grief, the laughter, wrath, mocking, fighting, subtlety without and within, of those who are in the professing church? Have you the certainty that your name is written in heaven? or have you searched, and cannot find your register? Do you know whether you are a child of God, or not? This being settled, have you been

led to search the book—to understand the book—to eat the fat, and drink the sweet? Is it your joy to send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared? Has the searching the word led you to wait for Christ from heaven? Are you charged with exclusivism because of that hated wall of separation? And has all this brought you lowly before the Lord in confession, and then worship? And, finally, is God before your soul, as He was before the remnant in chapter ix.? Has your soul found the sabbath of rest within the sacred wall, even Christ Himself?

Then beware of the men of Tyre, who will offer their tempting wares before the wall. Keep the gates shut—oh, keep the gates closed. Let nothing come in to break your rest in Christ—your joy in God. We need much the lesson of the last chapter to keep the gates shut; it will be most offensive to men of Tyre, but most pleasing to our God. He alone could have given us such a picture of the day in which we live, and He alone could give us such a light for our feet. May He sanctify us by His word—His word is truth!

C. S.

Will you read, in the fear of the Lord, Romans xii. 4, 5; xvi. 17?



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THE CHURCH OF GOD

AS FOUND

IN THE SCRIPTURES.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH? WHAT IS ITS MINISTRY?

WHAT IS ITS DESTINY?



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THE CHURCH OF GOD AS FOUND IN THE SCRIPTURES.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH? WHAT IS ITS MINISTRY?
WHAT IS ITS DESTINY?

THE first distinct intimation of the church we find in scripture is Matthew xvi. 18. Peter having confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Jesus having owned this as the revelation of the Father to him, He further said, "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter [a stone]; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ the Son of God, revealed of the Father, was the Rock, on which the church *was to be* built. Peter should be a stone in that then future building. That this is the clear meaning many other scriptures prove. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 11.) "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner." (Eph. ii. 20.)

Is it not also quite clear that the church was then a future thing? "I will build my church" — Jesus did not say, "I have built," or "I am building;" but "*I will* build."

The next reference to the church is in Matthew xviii. 17. This also is evidently future; otherwise surely whilst the Lord was with His disciples, the case of an offending brother would have been laid before Himself. "And if he shall neglect to hear

them, tell it unto the church : but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

There are no other scriptures whatever that speak of the church until we come to the church's birthday—Pentecost.

We may have to point out many types of the church, as the body and bride of Christ, in the Old Testament, but these could not be understood until it pleased God to reveal the joint body by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. (Eph. iii.) No doubt my reader would like to ask many questions as we go through the scriptures on this deeply interesting subject: I will anticipate those questions.

What then is the meaning of the word *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklesia*), which we translate church?

By carefully examining every place in scripture where this word occurs, its plain meaning is 'assembly.' I will point out one or two instances in which it is even so translated, and cannot mean anything else. Turn to Acts xix. 32, 39, 41. In each of these verses, the word translated 'assembly' is *ekklesia*, and evidently means, a gathering of people together.

In verse 37, "neither robbers of churches." This word "churches" evidently means heathen temples, or buildings. Is it the same word?

Oh no, this is quite another word altogether. There is no authority in scripture for calling a building a church. We should therefore never do so.

You said Pentecost was the church's birthday. Is this clear in scripture?

This is a point of such importance that nothing could be made more clear in scripture. The disciples were to remain in Jerusalem, until they were bap-

tized with the Holy Ghost. (Luke xxiv. 49 ; Acts i. 5.) It was on the day of Pentecost : " They were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Acts ii. gives a full account of the first day of the church of God. It was the first announcement of the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ ascended up to God's right hand. And God used this day's preaching in the conversion of three thousand souls. These were all added : " and they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul : and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common," &c. What a wondrous new thing this was, the like of which had never taken place before. " And the Lord added to the church [or assembly] daily, such as should be saved." All this was entirely of God. The Holy Ghost came down from heaven. The Lord added together. Thus this assembly on the very first day of its existence, was God's assembly. It could not be thus baptized by the Holy Ghost until the Holy Ghost was given ; and He could not be given until Jesus was glorified. (John vii. 39.) And Jesus could not as our Substitute and representative be glorified until He had glorified God on the cross ; then the Father must straightway glorify Him, by raising Him not only from the dead but by receiving Him to glory. When all this was done, the church was built. We shall see shortly in the Epistles, how the church is linked with the glory of God.

But were none saved, then, before Christ arose from the dead, and the Holy Ghost was thus sent

down? And if they did not belong to the church of God, what were they then?

Certainly, all who believed the promise of God were saved, or justified by faith, but they were and remained, saved individuals; saved Jews, or saved Gentiles. But now "There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 28.)

Then if Pentecost was the first day of the church, and it was formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, what is the subsequent history of the Acts of the Apostles?

The Acts are really the acts of the Holy Ghost, how He acted in gathering the predestined church out of the world. He used a variety of instruments; but you will find, as you read the history of this wondrous assembly that wherever the Holy Ghost acted, it was to form the one assembly of God. Power, the power of God, not of man, is seen everywhere. In chapter iii. there is a man who could say, "Silver and gold have I none;" but such was the power displayed in the name of Jesus, that all Jerusalem is stirred to its centre. And though all combined against the holy One of God, yet none could deny the power of God.

The church was the display of the power of God. Let us listen to the voice of prayer, at the church's first prayer meeting recorded in the Acts: . . . "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child [or servant] Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the

multitudes of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all." (Acts iv. 24-33.)

What a scene this was! one assembly, one heart, one purpose, the glory of Jesus! The Holy Ghost present. Surely it makes one sigh to compare this with the present state of Christendom. How could this assembly withstand the hatred and opposition of the whole world? God was with them—the divine person of the Holy Ghost.

It is of all importance to notice this in the history of the assembly of God in the Acts. The Holy Ghost is always present to guide the assembly—this fact is the foundation of the church's constitution as seen on earth.

Peter said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Stephen said, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." The Spirit said unto Peter, "Behold three men seek thee, arise therefore, and get thee down and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." (Acts x. 19.) And after the conversion of the Gentiles, and the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost on them, Peter says, "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting." In chapter xi. the believing Gentiles were baptized by the Holy Ghost into the assembly of God at Antioch. In chapter xiii. the Holy Ghost takes the same place of divine guidance in the assembly at Antioch. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." "So they being sent forth by the

Holy Ghost, departed." When a question of great moment had to be settled by the assembly at Jerusalem, the presence of the Holy Ghost was again distinctly recognized—"for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," &c. (Acts xv. 28.) Even the apostles were guided by this divine person, "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not."

Thus we see the assembly of God, throughout its history in the Acts, under the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. Sad failure as to this was distinctly foretold. (Chap. xx. 28-30.) Yea, the apostle himself failed. (Chap. xxi. 4.) But the failure of man does not alter the truth of God. Christ is glorified; the Holy Ghost is sent down; and He remains with the church. Oh, how has Christendom utterly failed to own the divine presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost! I beg of you, my reader, to compare your own condition and associations with the Acts as to this. The church, or assembly, of God is one, as gathered together by the Lord. Sects or divisions are not of God, but carnal and of man.

Is that clearly revealed in the word of God?

Nothing can be more so; read 1 Corinthians i. 10-13; iii. 1-5: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions [or sects], are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Oh let us own the exceeding wickedness of sectarianism; and let us return unto our God with confession and humiliation. How fearfully has Christendom departed from that

beautiful scene when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul!" One object—the glory of Christ; and all filled with the Holy Ghost. Compare this, say, with a so-called Liberation meeting!! But enough—can God approve of this wicked strife?

What do the Epistles teach as to the church?

They address the children of God now, as *the one* assembly of God: "Unto the church [or assembly] of God which is at Corinth," &c. "Unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father," &c. This wondrous assembly we find was chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world, and blest of God with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." All this is more fully unfolded, the eye being fixed on Christ, in Ephesians i. There we see Him raised from among the dead, and placed as the risen man, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things, to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

But had He not always this glory? Doubtless He had in His own eternal Godhead. As the eternal Son He had glory with the Father before the world began. But now as man, the second Adam—the man who died for our sins, according to the scriptures—the Substitute forsaken of God on the cross—having glorified God there, having finished the work given Him to do; God has given Him, as man, this highest place above all things.

The universe under His feet. But all this "to us-ward who believe;" all this as head of the church, His body.

We have seen the person of the Holy Ghost in the Acts, in His own divine sovereignty, as the foundation of all church constitution on earth, we now look up and see the Lord of glory, the head of the church, far above all, in heaven.

Surely, then, the most worthy of mankind alone can form the church of God?

If you read Ephesians ii. you will be amazed to find the opposite of this to be the case. "And you who were dead in trespasses and sins"—"children of wrath, even as others." These are the very persons whom God hath quickened together with Christ; and hath given to them the wondrous place of oneness with Him, in all that exalted glory. This is altogether of God—God's new creation. Yes, the assembly of God is God's new creation. And the once rejected Jesus, now Lord of all glory, "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Col. i. 18.) Mark, He is head of *the body*, not the different bodies, not the different regiments of Christendom, nor religious bodies of the so-called church. No, all this is not in scripture, not of God; it is entirely of man, or Satan, who never ceases to deface the assembly of God, the one body of Christ. Do not help him a bit in this work.

This wondrous display of richest grace is far beyond all human thought. Just think of these words, if you have the discernment of the Spirit, "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 Christ." (1 Cor.

xii. 12.) Is not this wondrous? Just as all the members of the human body are joined to the head, and form one man, or one body; so also all who believe are joined to Christ, raised from the dead far above all, and form the one Christ!

But do you say that all who are saved now on earth, form the one body of Christ, and every case of true conversion to God—is it possible that all the saved belong to this one body? What, we all?

Let scripture speak: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 13.) This is the church of God as found in scripture. And this is the church of God, because it is entirely of God. Read the next verses, 14–27. "God hath set the members every one in the body, as it hath pleased him." "That there should be no schism in the body." "God hath tempered the body together." "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Let us with all lowliness of mind own all this. "There is ONE BODY and ONE SPIRIT," "ONE LORD," one faith, one baptism: "one God and Father of all." Carefully study the context of these words, Ephesians iv. 1–6. The effect is marvellous when the soul gets hold of this great fact (long lost, but true), that there is one body, even as there is one Lord and one God; and that in scripture two or more bodies cannot be found. And above all that, this one body is of God; God's workmanship. Then it is found, that all sectarianism is direct opposition to God.

I grant this is a tremendous discovery; that so much that we have been proud of, is sin and rebellion against God. But evidently it is so. In

deep humiliation let us own it. The one assembly of God is also presented in scripture as the bride of Christ, the wife of the Lamb. Grace beyond all human thought. Here we find the outflow of the affections of Christ as man. And though this mystery of divine love was kept hid until revealed to the apostles and prophets of the church fully stated in Ephesians iii., yet many were the precious figures of this that went before.

So early as in paradise, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." God in His own love would give Adam an object on which his love might be placed. And thus, in this figure of Him that was to come, God sets forth His own eternal purpose; to build the church, the one body, the bride; that the Man up there in the glory shall not be alone but shall have an object in which the infinite love of His own heart shall have its eternal delight. And was not the way in which God formed the woman most significant? Adam was laid in deep sleep—type of the depths of death to which Jesus must descend to redeem His bride. Of that dead rib, in figure, the living woman was built. It was to that awakened or risen Adam, the woman, one with himself, was presented. "And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.'" There were many beautiful creatures in paradise; but *only one* made meet for the affections of Adam. God only built *one Eve*, God only builds *one bride* for Christ.

Oh what a thought, what a fact, that "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without

blemish." "Christ is the head of the church."
 "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and
 of his bones." (Eph. v.)

It is blessed to gaze on Christ, the object of the
 believer's love, but that is not the thought here.
 The assembly of God, the bride of Christ, is the
 object of His love, of His delight. Have you
 passed from death unto life? then you form part
 of that one body, one assembly of God, bride of
 Christ, object of His love. Think; object of the
 love of Christ!

In the call of Rebecca also we have a striking
 illustration of the bride of Christ. Isaac must
 first be offered up, and received in figure from the
 dead; Sarah, the Jewish economy, be set aside.
 Then the father Abraham, sends Eliezer from
 Canaan to the far country to fetch a bride for
 Isaac, the risen son from the dead, in figure.
 Jewels first are given to Rebecca, and raiment,
 then she gladly leaves all to go to meet the bride-
 groom whom not having seen she loves. Then the
 meeting. And then is she the possessed object of
 Isaac's love. Again there is one bride. Just so
 when God had actually received His beloved Son
 from the dead; offered up for us, and could not
 be spared; then received to the heavenly Canaan;
 then God the Father sent the Holy Ghost, to this
 far country, to fetch a bride for Christ. Jewels
 first, the righteousness of God established by
 the death of the cross; and then raiment—Christ
 raised from the dead our righteousness; and all
 given to, and put upon the believer: and
 then farewell; separation from all below. And,
 like Eliezer, the Holy Ghost leads the bride along
 to meet the heavenly Bridegroom. The church of
 the scriptures is found waiting and looking for
 Christ, the second time unto salvation. And, oh,

the meeting! As Isaac lifted up his eyes, so the loving eyes of Jesus are looking for us, His bride. And we shall soon, like Rebecca, lift up our eyes. We shall see Him as He is and be like Him. This joyful theme I leave until we arrive at the third part of our subject—the destiny of the church.

One more interesting figure in the Old Testament—Ruth. God is pleased by these His own figures, to give us understanding of this great reality, the church, the bride of Christ. Here is one who by nature was a stranger to the covenant and promise; death also was written upon her house. A Moabitess, and her own husband dead. Most touchingly does her history illustrate the grace of Christ in bringing a soul to Himself. She is brought by Naomi in bitterness of soul to the fields of Boaz. My reader may remember the bitterness of those days in which he was led by the Spirit to Christ. But oh, how welcome in the fields of Boaz! Is she thirsty? let her drink. Is she hungry? let her eat. Does she glean? let fall handfuls on purpose for her. Such is the grace of our precious Jesus. Are you but a gleaner lately bowed in bitterness at the sense of your own lost condition? Ah, how welcome to Christ! Are you thirsty? welcome to the water of life. Are you hungry? welcome to the bread of life. Has He not let handfuls fall on your path on purpose? But far more than this was to follow, “My daughter shall I not seek rest for thee?” And now she is identified with Boaz in the figure of death—she lay at his feet; and what the other kinsman could not do, Boaz did. He redeemed her to be his bride. And all the elders bare witness. Once the object of the gleaning kindness of Boaz, now the object of his bridal love. A welcome stranger, now the

most honoured place on earth, the loved bride of Boaz, and the mother of David.

Has not God thus dealt with us? He would not have us be merely welcome gleaners in the fields of Christ; but one with Him, bride of the Lamb. There was but one Ruth; there is but one church, one body, one bride.

May I ask, then, have all Christians to leave the different churches of men; such as Romanism, Anglicanism, Wesleyanism, &c., and to form one church, and so make one body, one assembly?

Many have thought so, but it is a most unscriptural mistake. As we have already seen, the church of God is not a thing of man's making. It is wholly of God. Eve did not make herself. It is remarkable that at Corinth, where there was most failure and division, in that very epistle we learn that all believers *are baptized into one body*. Let this great truth be only received in faith that all believers now are baptized into one body; and that this is of God; and the effect is sure to be that instead of fleshly boasting we shall be deeply ashamed of sectarianism. And the believer who receives this truth can no longer belong to a sect, cost what it may. Only let the word of God have its authority, then how can I deliberately do that which is in direct opposition to God?

In the Acts of the Holy Ghost then, we have the history, how God set up the church in the beginning of its days. Then in the Epistles we have the wondrous revelation what the church is.

Before we look at its ministry. There are two things found in scripture I desire to call your attention to—the Lord's supper is one of them. 1 Corinthians x. 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the

communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Is not this the perfect communion of the one body of Christ—each believer introduced into the same fellowship of divine blessing? And does not this separate us from the world? "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils."

This communion is further explained, as received from the Lord by Paul, in chapter xi. What impresses me in this distinct full explanation of remembering Jesus, and shewing forth His death until He comes is this; that it is the act of the whole one assembly of God. There is neither a priest with his mass, nor a minister with his sacrament. Either the one or the other would entirely set aside the very act of *communion*. The Romish priest, the ritualist, with all his imitations of Rome, or the presiding minister at his sacrament; all this is not in scripture, and we must admit that it is all of human origin. Not one bit of scripture can I find for a shred of it. Oh what sad human interference; yea, what assumption for any man thus to act without the word of the Lord!

The second thing I would notice is this—Does the scripture foretell the failure of the Church of God on earth in outward testimony? There are sad and abundant proofs that failure did set in even during the lives of the apostles. (See 1 Cor. xi. 18–21.) Shameful evils, divisions, and drunkenness, and the Lord's hand in judgments, because they had not humbled themselves. In Titus, unruly vain talkers, &c., are found and rebuked. Terrible failures in 2 Peter ii., and in Jude, are spoken of. But this is not all; the Spirit accu-

rately describes the fearful apostasy of the last days of this church-time or period. (2 Tim. iii.) "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Read the description of these days. We may say those days unto the end of the chapter.

It may be asked, If God set up the one assembly of God, one church, one body, then is not the church of Rome that one church, and ought we not all to belong to her?

If the church of Rome is the church of God as found in the scriptures, then undoubtedly we ought to belong to her. But is this the case? I am not aware of one single particular in which the church of Rome is the same, or like the church of God as found in scripture. At a future time, if the Lord will, I may compare the church of God with the church of Rome. Professing Christendom, as was foretold by the Lord, has become a great tree, and evil men lodge in its branches. It has become the great house of 2 Timothy ii.

If this is so, what instructions has the child of God for his path in these last days? Is he to remain in fellowship with all this evil, or is he to separate himself from the evil?

Hear the answer of God: "The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge [or separate] himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use," &c. (2 Tim. ii. 19-21.) And again, "From such turn away." (Chap. iii. 1-5.) The path of the obedient Christian need not be more plain.

Hatred and persecution it must bring (ver. 12), as all have found it who have obeyed these divine instructions for our days.

I now return to the church of God as found in the scriptures.

WHAT IS ITS MINISTRY?

I just remind my reader that in looking carefully at the history of the church in the Acts, we found one all-important fact as to Ministry—the divine presence of the person of the Holy Ghost. Bearing that fact well in mind I ask your attention to the three chapters on ministry, that God has been pleased to give us, with other scriptures. (1 Cor. xii., xiii., xiv.) Will you read these chapters, before we proceed? Observe this is the very subject. Chapter xii. contains the great principles of the christian ministry; chapter xiii. the spirit in which that ministry should be exercised; and chapter xiv. those ministries in exercise. The Spirit of God will not lower or degrade the person of Jesus—a most important test in these days. And again, no one can truly maintain the Lordship of Jesus but by the Holy Ghost. Great care is then taken to shew that the various gifts of ministry are not held by one man! There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; different ministries, but the same Lord; diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all. And then, after enumerating different gifts, the divine sovereignty and guidance of the Holy Ghost is maintained. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” Thus we have the constitution of the church as to ministry—Jesus, Lord on high; the Holy Ghost using the gifts as He will on earth. It may be said, Some of those gifts are no longer manifested

now. True ; He divideth severally as He will, then and now.

This then is the principle of ministry as set up of God, the ministry that is of God. "And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers," &c., &c. I do not however find such a thought, that God set up one man to be the minister or priest of the assembly.

Now that is important, as we wish to learn all that scripture brings before us on this subject.

Then we have the place that love, *charity*, has in christian ministry. (Chap. xiii.) May it have its place in every line of this paper !

The principle then before us is plainly this, that the Holy Ghost is in the church, using the different gifts severally as He will. All of God, but on earth the order of the Holy Ghost. There was confusion : alas, what will man not spoil ? (See chap. xiv. 26.) But still the same order of God by the Holy Ghost is enforced. God did not say, My order has failed, now set one man to be the minister. No ; but, "Let the prophets speak, two or three, and let the others judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the other hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted," &c. And these are the commandments of the Lord. (Ver. 37.)

Now this is God's only order of ministry, and He is not the author of confusion ; compare this with Ephesians iv. 7-16. Here the ascended Christ, far above all heavens, "gave some apostles, and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And these were

to continue. These are the gifts of Christ, and the Holy Ghost divideth severally to every man as He will. Do not forget the personal presence of the Holy Ghost.

But do we not read in the Acts that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every city? (Acts xiv. 23.) And that Titus was to do the same; was in fact delegated to do so. (Titus i. 5.)

I have read all this, but I have never read of Paul, Barnabas, or Titus, ordaining a pastor, or an evangelist, or a teacher. These are the gifts of the ascended Christ. And even when the apostles were here, we have not the slightest hint of the ordination of any of these. The only thing at all like it was when Paul and Barnabas themselves, who had long been most eminent gifts of Christ, were commended to a special evangelical tour, separated and sent by the Holy Ghost. (Acts xiii. 2.)

But do you mean that there is no authority in the scriptures for the ordination of a pastor over a church?

Most certainly. There is not such a thought in scripture. It is entirely human invention. Elders, or bishops, were ordained. For an elder and a bishop is the same thing, that is clear from Titus i. 5-7. The same person is an elder in verse 5 and bishop in verse 7.

Eldership was an office; pastors, and teachers, evangelists, are gifts. I speak of scripture—I know nothing else. Again, in scripture an elder is never the same as teacher, pastor, or evangelist. The elders of the church at Ephesus were bishops (*episkopos*), and as such, overseers, and were to *feed* the church of God.

But does not the word “feed” imply that they were teachers?

This word *poimaino*, translated *feed*, is used by

the Spirit eleven times in the New Testament: Matthew ii. 6 ; Luke xvii. 7 ; John xxi. 16 ; Acts xx. 28 ; 1 Corinthians ix. 7 ; 1 Peter v. 2 ; Jude 12 ; Revelation ii. 27 ; vii. 17 ; xii. 5 ; xix. 15. A careful examination of these and their contexts will shew that it is not the imparting of spiritual food so much, if at all, that is meant, but shepherding, more in the sense of ruling.

Elders, then, were brethren gifted with wisdom to shepherd or rule the church of God. An elder thus gifted and qualified to rule, must rule well his own house. And one thing they were needed for, was to stop the mouths of vain talkers. This being the sense of the word, then in Jude 12 "feeding themselves" would rather be ruling themselves—democracy. One of the dark signs of the last days. The very opposite of knowing or discerning them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. In short, the "unruly" are to be rebuked.

And might not the same person be an elder and also a teacher?

Certainly, just as the same person may be a draper and a grocer. But that does not prove, that a grocer is a draper? Peter was both elder and teacher. (1 Peter v. 1.) Thus whilst qualified persons were ordained or appointed to shepherd or rule the assembly in every city by the apostles or their delegates (and it is true that such persons might or might not be also gifted of Christ to evangelize or teach) yet in scripture we never find the shadow of an interference either to ordain or to hinder any such gifts of the ascended Christ ; as teachers, evangelists, pastors, &c.

Is there such an instance to be found?

Not one. To do so, two things must be interfered with ; the administration of the Lord in

glory, and the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly.

Well, this is very solemn; are you quite sure there is no scripture authority for the modern ordination of a priest, clergyman, or minister?

Not a single text.

Does not Acts vi. give such authority?

No, not the least. These men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, were simply appointed to serve tables, or take care of the poor. *Not a thought* of ordaining them as modern pastors over churches. As with the elders, these servants of the assembly might be also gifted of Christ to preach the word. Some were so, but these were never ordained to preach; not such a thought. The thing is monstrous; if we see a teacher, pastor or evangelist gifted of Christ, empowered by the Holy Ghost to preach and teach Christ, for the church or any man to ordain or appoint such a person, would be to set aside as insufficient the act of Christ. Surely to recognize, becomes the whole church of God. For recognition of Christ's gifts to His church is obedience to Him. And not to recognize a gift of Christ is disobedience to Christ.

But does not Acts xiii. afford some authority for ordaining a minister or pastor over a church? Is it not often quoted for that purpose?

Read the whole passage: now is there such a thought in it as ordaining a clergyman or minister over a church, or parish? These dear devoted men were already fully recognized teachers—Barnabas and Saul. And these were appointed by the Holy Ghost to a special work, or journey; and, as such, solemnly commended by the church at Antioch. It is very strange that so many take this matter for granted, without ever searching the word of God.

Is there no other scripture that seems to favour the practice of ordaining one person, to be the minister over a church?

There cannot be one. It is impossible for God to contradict Himself, and if we own the constitution of the church which is of God; that is, the Lordship of Jesus and guidance of the Holy Ghost, as we have seen, and the distributing severally as He will; those gifted to speak to the edification of the assembly, to speak two or three, the rest to judge, &c.; the moment you introduce the clergyman, or a minister, having the Reverend pre-eminence over the assembly, you immediately set aside both the presence of the Holy Ghost and the godly liberty of the gifts of Christ to speak two or three. In fact it is utterly impossible for God's order, according to His word, and man's order set up since, to stand together. One man cannot have the pre-eminence, and the Holy Ghost be free to use whom He will.

Well, all this is amazing; but do the upholders of the clerical or episcopal system really know that it has no authority in the word of God?

Strange to say, they do; and the best and latest writer on episcopacy fully admits that it is nowhere found in scripture.

Then where is it found?

In tradition; the traditional history. Some say it must have begun just at the close of apostolic times; some, later.

But if there be no evidence of it in apostolic times, then what of apostolic episcopal succession?

All vanishes. How can there be a succession of what did not begin?

But some say it began before the death of the Apostle John, in Asia Minor; and that he must have approved of it.

But does the scripture say this system of one

man having the pre-eminence over the assembly began in the days of John? that is the question.

It does, *it does*. John wrote an inspired epistle, on account of this, and on the very subject. We shall therefore soon see whether he approved or not of the first person that assumed the position taken by the clergyman or minister over a church. (3 John.) Truly John approves of the well-beloved Gaius, found walking in the truth. He has no greater joy than that the children of God should walk in the truth. He says, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren." These brethren were such as went forth FOR CHRIST'S NAME SAKE, taking nothing of the Gentiles, and they had borne witness of the charity of Gaius before the assembly or church. Now if you bear in mind the truth, and the constitution of the church, the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost in sending those brethren, gifts of Christ, in His name, in keeping with the truth as to this, Gaius had gladly received the visit of these ministering brethren, in the charity inculcated, as to this very thing in 1 Corinthians xiii. Walking in the truth, he owned the order of God. And John says, "We therefore ought to receive such that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth." Oh, how sweet is this fellowship in the ministry of the truth! "Let the prophets speak two or three" had long been the command of Christ, and so we ought to receive these dear gifted brethren who come in the name of Christ, and have fellowship in the truth. This was christian ministry as instituted of God: "We therefore ought to receive such."

Now we have another character, and John says, "I wrote unto the assembly: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them

receiveth us not." Now study these words ; here is a man who takes the place of pre-eminence over the church, or assembly. But to do this, he must resist the Holy Ghost ; he must refuse liberty of ministry, yes, even if it be the aged and beloved Apostle John, and brethren with him. The very first development of clericalism proves, unanswerably, that it must resist and set aside the order of God. Did the inspired John approve of this first appearance of clericalism ? He says, " Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us, with malicious words : and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the assembly." Thank God we have the strongest possible disapproval of clericalism in these inspired words. And I ask, Do not these words faithfully describe the proud spirit of clerical pretensions to this very day ?

It is too true ; but surely you would not say that every ordained minister over a church has the spirit of Diotrefes, the first to assume this place ?

Far from it ; many a dear humble servant of the Lord groans in that false position. But what we learn from this scripture is, that every one that takes this position of ministerial pre-eminence is in direct opposition to the mind and word of God. Diotrefes could not maintain that position and receive the brethren, neither can any clergyman or minister maintain his position and receive the brethren as the gifts of Christ, to be used by the Holy Ghost in the church.

But are not clergymen and ministers receiving eminent evangelists ? and is not God using these in conversions ?

That is so, and God is using them in proportion as they lay aside the sectarian and clerical position. Nay, is not the Lord even by all this rebuking clerical assumption? A noticeable fact must here be named: God has been pleased to restore to the church the knowledge of His own order of church constitution and ministry—the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, and the liberty of christian ministry, to serve alone the Lord Christ. And though like the remnant in the days of Nehemiah, this feeble remnant whom the Lord has been pleased thus to bless, are conscious of much failure, yet God has been pleased to be with them. And this feeble remnant have proved the all sufficiency of God; and to this feeble and unworthy little flock God has restored the full gospel of His grace. And what is the result, at this present moment? The whole mass of the clergy of every sect under the sun are arrayed in determined hostility. Pamphlet, and book, and tract, teems from the press! full of gross misrepresentation. Yes, and nothing more common than for the clergy to be preaching the very truth God has restored by these weak dependent brethren, whilst they denounce with prating words, like Diotrephes, the brethren whom they cannot receive, and maintain their clerical position. The third epistle of John exactly describes the whole struggle of to-day. On the one side, there are a few like Gaius, who have learnt to obey the commands of Christ as to ministry; on the other hand, there is the whole body of the clergy determined to resist the order of God's word and maintain that human order of ministry begun by Diotrephes: in many cases, doubtless, ignorantly. The word of God calls one of these principles good; the other He calls evil. Surely it must be good to obey God, and no less certain is it evil to follow man.

But you allow elders were ordained, if pastors, teachers or evangelists never were ?

Yes, just so.

Then why does not the assembly ordain them now ?

Simply because the assembly did not do so then ; but the apostles or those they delegated to do so. We nowhere read that the church ordained elders. How plain would be our path if we really were subject to the word of God ! Never were human pretensions found more utterly wanting, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, than the claims of the ordained ministry when thus tested by the word of God. And equally so as to this, whether we apply the word to Romanism, or Protestantism—what utter departure from the order of God !

Not only so, but men have the audacity to ridicule God's order, nay, to call it confusion and discord ; and to pride themselves with this humanly ordained ministry as if it were the church itself ; and to talk of it just as though it could be traced in succession from the apostles ; when not only did the apostles not practise it, but the very last of them, the beloved John, we have heard denouncing it in the strongest possible terms.

But if the episcopal establishment has no authority in the word of God for the ordination of their clergy, and it is clear they have not the least, then where do they get their authority from ?

Clearly not from God ; but from the world—from the State—indeed it is the world. And to call it the church is to use words calculated to deceive. It is the world divided into parishes, over which a clergyman is ordained. Is this the church of God ? Compare it with the church of God as found in the scriptures ; and compare its ministry

with the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. I ask, is there any safety in such a system of the world, unfairly called *the church*? Oh, is there any wonder that its members are going so fast to Rome, having never known the presence of the Holy Ghost? and never allowed Christ to give, and the Spirit to use, His gifts, as He will? But having adopted the Diotrephes ministry, as handed down from Rome, there is no remedy, there is no hope, but to withdraw yourselves from that form of godliness without the power.

The clerical order has been, from its first development, the greatest lever of Satan for evil in Christendom. Oh, my brethren in Christ, come out of her. Let us return to the Lord. It is yet true that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is present. We can testify to the truth of this promise. We have been now, some of us, gathered together in His blessed name some thirty, some forty, and some, more years; and, blessed be the name of the Lord, we have found His presence more than all the ordained ministry in the world. He is enough, the mind and heart to fill. Ebenezer, Hallelujah. Oh how we long that you should share the deep joy of His presence with us. We assure you one hour in His dear presence makes more than up for all the misrepresentations heaped upon us.

If you return to the truth of the scriptures no doubt you will suffer persecution, but no pen can tell the blessedness, and deliverance, and deep enjoyment, of communion with Christ that is the portion of every child of God gathered *together* truly to Christ, in His precious name.

Do you think it is a light matter to refuse the gifts of Christ and the guidance of the Spirit in the assembly; and to set up in its place an

ordained man—be that man who he may? Can you thus grieve and quench the Spirit, and not suffer in soul? Impossible.

Oh, fellow Christians, awake, awake, to these solemn truths. Search the scriptures. Will you? Will you obey them? Do you own their authority? God give you decision and purpose of heart. I write to you thus in the love of Christ. I long for your deliverance, and am not ignorant of Satan's devices to keep you where you are. I write strongly, but there is power in truth to the children of God.

Just think, if all the believers in your town were gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, truly owning Him as Lord, and all filled with the Holy Ghost, all of one mind and soul, each having one object—the glory of Christ—no clerical hindrance to the gifts of Christ, the Spirit using all the gifts in divine power, sectarianism not received—abhorred; tell me now, what would be the effect on the world of all this? The gifts are so rejected and disallowed, that we can form no idea how many are laid aside now. I heard of one minister in Ireland saying lately, he had found forty evangelists in what he called his church! All these had been dormant. Oh, can you conceive anything so dreadful, so hindering, as this ordained ministry received from Rome?

One question more, Is it not said that Timothy was ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians?

Certainly not in scripture, but in a note which has *been added* to the end of 2 Timothy. It is impossible that this could be true. It would not only have entirely set aside the order of God; but when the apostles sent for the elders (Acts xx.), there is not the slightest allusion to such a person as the

bishop of Ephesus ; and there must have been, had such been the case.

Well, but he might have been after this time ?

Then he could not have been *the first*, for the elders are called bishops as we have seen. It was evidently another name for the office of elder. We must conclude then, the more we search the scriptures, the more evident it becomes that the whole pretensions of episcopacy have no foundation in the word of God.

Only once more. Is it not true, that the episcopacy is found in the most early church history ?

It is. And what does this prove ? That the most early so-called church history, is the history of that ecclesiastical system which so soon entirely set aside the order of ministry we find in scripture. The one is of God, and found in His word ; the other of man, and found in his history. Which shall we follow ?

Many of these remarks apply to the episcopacy, falsely called the church—whether of Rome, or England. But what of all the various bodies of Dissenters ?

I am not aware that any of them has returned to the scriptural order and constitution of the assembly of God and its ministry. Is the presence of the Holy Ghost, dividing to every man severally as He will, owned in any denomination ?

Well, but the church elects its own pastor or minister. Is this anywhere found in scripture ?

Nowhere. The ministers are Christ's gifts to the assembly ; and is the assembly to elect whether they shall have a gift from Christ ? The glory of Christ and the heavenly dignity of the christian ministry is lost in such a carnal system. I do not mean the painful scenes that occur at such elections—rejections and splits—but merely to the

principle of daring to call in question the prerogative of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Ghost; failure there is everywhere, but man's failure does not alter God's principles. It is, too, in vain to try to find the order of God, as found in scripture, in Wesleyan organization. Do we find a conference in scripture daring to dictate where the gifts of Christ shall be placed? God may be working by one of His servants in such a town, the conference says, No you must obey us, not God, you must leave that town and go to such a place. Can you shew me anything like this in the word? Impossible. Not even an apostle ever dare so set aside the administration of Christ.

But do not these people pray to be guided by the Holy Ghost in appointing the ministers?

Yes, indeed, they do; and what must such prayer be to God? Asking God to guide them in acting in direct opposition to His word.

I ask, now, is there any wonder that the most spiritual in all these human systems, are leaving them; and are being gathered together, in the name of the Lord Jesus; a feeble despised remnant making no pretensions to be the church of God? But this they are; they are gathered together, as at the beginning, and owning nothing, but what they find in the word of God. Do you say, I own I see the truth of all this thus brought before me, and I admit how utterly wrong my position is, but I have been trained to it; I am in it? What can I do? There is my family, my needs; and all my friends would turn against me if I walked according to the word of God. I know all that, but Satan will try to magnify these difficulties. Is not God for us, greater than all these difficulties? I feel for you; I pray for you; God will be with you in His own path. (See Psalm cxix. 59, 60.)

All are moving; either to infidelity, entirely setting aside the authority of God's word; to Rome, and dark superstition; or to the path of Christ as at the beginning. We now turn to our third inquiry:

WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S DESTINY?

We must be most careful not to confound this with Israel's future destiny, as foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament. No doubt every promise to Israel shall be strictly fulfilled, although they are for the present set aside, as we learn in Romans xi. I name this because of the common mistake of placing the church in the position of Israel.

All the promises to the church are heavenly, whilst the promises to Israel are earthly. The confounding these two destinies has led to the mistaken expectation that it is the church that is to be the means of the world's conversion to Christ. The gathering or forming the church is a special work, occupying a special period of time, a parenthesis in Israel's history: known unto our God is that moment, when the church will be complete. Then will be fulfilled that promise of Christ, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv.) This is in blessed keeping with the first type of the church, when paradise was prepared, and Adam was there, and God brought Eve unto the man. Has not our adorable Jesus gone up on high to prepare a place that *the desire of His heart* may be fulfilled? as He says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be

with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 24.) What a destiny ! with Him ; where He is. The second Adam, the second Eve. We are assured by revelation from our dear Lord, that He will come Himself. He will not send His angels for us—this He will do for the elect Jews, for the earthly kingdom—but the Lord Himself shall come for us from heaven, whether we are alive and remain to that moment, or whether we are asleep. Yes, He who came down to Calvary's cross will also come in the clouds for us. He died for us ; He comes for us ; oh, what love is this ! No judgment for our sins ; no, He has borne the utmost due to us, and now He is coming without sin unto salvation.

One more precious fact, " We know that when he shall appear, we shall be LIKE HIM ; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John iii. 2.) What a destiny ! to be like Him. In the full image of the heavenly man in glory—holy, pure, incorruptible ! We are now accepted in the Beloved ; the whole value of His person and work reckoned to us ; reckoned dead with Him, and risen in Him, one with Him. But actually, and everlastingly, to be like Him ! Do not our souls long for this ? and can we not say, " As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness ?" But, oh, most wondrous fact, is not this the language of Christ Himself ? So really we are one with Him, that His own resurrection was but the first-fruits. And it will be when His body, the church, raised from the dust, or changed in a moment, and the millions of the redeemed meet Him in His own likeness ; then shall He see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied ; sweetly shall we share His joy. From

eternity has He looked forward to that moment, now so near, when the bride shall be presented to Himself: and when it comes, do we not hear Him up there in the heavens saying, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone," &c. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." And again, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." (Song of Songs ii., iv.) The Holy Ghost must use sweetest poetry to express the heart of Christ.

Such is the joy and love of that Man in the glory. Is it not wondrous that the glorified One should thus be waiting and longing for us? He has not only loved the church, and given Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, but there is yet the *presentation* so dear to His own heart, "that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 27.) This is the sure destiny of the church of God; the certain result of His work on ~~the~~ the cross. "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and un-reprovable in his sight." (Col. i. 22.) "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, . . . blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. i. 8.) "To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (1 Thess. iii. 13.) Thus we learn the settled purpose of God to fulfil the desire of Christ. We shall see Him as He is: we shall be like Him. We shall be unblameable in holiness, in spotless purity. Then shall the heart of our eternal lover be satisfied. Oh, think of Him thus!

Do not merely read these burning words of scripture, but in them see your Lord ; He who will come quickly to call you away. Ah, this world's cold wintry blast will be over and gone. No more groaning over inbred sin, no more conflict, no more sins and failure, no more sorrows ; all, all gone. And if the church is thus the object fitted to be the delight of Christ through eternal days, as Eve was the object of the love of Adam, and one with himself, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, ought not then Christ to be the one object of His church now ? He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The same love that we shall enjoy in that unsullied and eternal brightness, is the love wherewith He loves us now in this world's night of darkness. Oh, let our hearts rest in His precious love. Oh, the riches of His grace, to give such vile worms a destiny so glorious. The new creation of God, pure and holy. Members of His body, of His bone, and of His flesh. I gaze on that risen Man in the glory, and can say, I shall be like Him. What can I desire more ?

Does scripture unfold anything further as to the church's destiny, after it is caught up to meet and be with the Lord as described in 1 Thessalonians iv. ? Where will the church be in that hour of temptation, coming on the earth ? And in that time of tribulation such as never was, and never shall be after ? and when Christendom or Babylon is destroyed ? and during the millennial kingdom of Israel on earth ? Through all this, what is the church's destiny ? Is it made known ?

It is. After the close of its history on earth, and the outward testimony of the professing church is set aside, spued out of his mouth, the veil is thrown aside. Heaven is opened to our view. The redeemed are represented, by four-

and-twenty elders. God rests—sat on the throne. The saints rest—they sit on thrones around the throne of God. When seraphim and cherubim, the four living ones, give glory to Him that sat on the throne, the redeemed reply with worship to God, as the Creator of all things. (Rev. iv.)

The Man in the glory has waited until His redeemed ones, gathered up at His coming, are there with Him, then He will be known to be worthy to take the book of counsels and judgments out of the right hand of God—emblem of divine power. What a sight is that! look at it. The Man, the Lamb as it had been slain, worthy to go up to God—Himself God—and take from His right hand the book. The glorified Man thus becomes the executor of divine power and judgments. Up to this point, He sat on the Father's throne; now He is seen in the centre of the throne—the first preparatory act, for subduing of all things to Himself. This calls out the new song of the redeemed; and the loud saying of the angelic myriads. The redeemed become deeply interested in the future circles of redemption—as the corrected translation of Revelation v. 9–10—not 'us,' but 'them.' Wondrous chapter, revealing the association of the saints with Christ, during the period of woes, on this earth afterwards described. There they remain during the opening of the seals, the blast of the trumpets, the pouring out of the vials of God's wrath on the earth, the sudden resurrection of the Roman Empire, the utter apostasy of Babylon the Great, the full ripened wickedness of Christendom, and its fearful overthrow and destruction. Then the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. (Rev. xix.) This glorious event having taken

place, the Lord Jesus will come in judgment on the living nations. All that have been beheaded for the word of God during this time of dreadful infidel wickedness will now be raised from among the dead, and form part of the first resurrection, its full complement.

Then the millennium, the one thousand years of blessedness, begins. After which the judgment of the dead, and then the eternal state.

The church is found in intelligent worship, during all these events, from the beginning of the judgments or before, until the marriage of the Lamb. What a destiny! all clearly revealed in the word of God. But all heavenly, and of God. Nothing earthly or of man. This is very marked, even during the millennial reign. I invite close attention to this important fact very fully explained in Revelation xxi. 9 to xxii. 6.

“Come hither,” says one of the seven angels, “I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And what did he shew John? “That great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.” What a contrast this will be to what is now seen on earth! “Holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven”—what purity! “from God.” Do you, my reader, belong to this heavenly bride that will be from God, and “having the glory of God?” This language could not be applied to angel or archangel, principalities or powers: “Having the glory of God!” oh, wondrous grace! And her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. What a change from this sinful state, to unclouded purity, in all its unsullied clearness! The wall, great and high, speaks of the perfect security of the bride during this time of reign, and putting all things under His feet.

The gates of the city—place of administration—shew the wondrous part the church will have in the administration of the world to come; and this though in connection with the earthly people of restored Israel. Every precious stone is named to shew forth the glory of this building of God: it is a perfect vast cube, heavenly perfection: also a perfect square. (Ver. 16.) Divinely perfect whether viewed in the heavens or from the earth. The city pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the street of the city pure gold, as it were transparent glass. Inherent, absolute, stainless, purity, and divine righteousness. Constituted the righteousness of God—and nothing without to defile. All transparent purity, within and without—thus shall we be the righteousness of God. What a destiny! No temple there. The Lord God and the Lamb shall be there. Still the Lamb—for ever the Lamb. All, all, we owe to the once bleeding Lamb. No need now of sun or moon, or creation-comforts: “For the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” What a home above, and all is as certain, nay, more certain, than that the morrow’s sun shall light the eastern hills. Every moment bringing us, yea, bringing the whole church of God, nearer this place prepared, this home above of peace and love.

Students of the book are aware that the eternal state is described in Revelation xxi. 1–8. Is the destiny of the bride revealed there? Her destiny in the eternal state!

Oh yes, when the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea, she is described as the same holy city, new Jerusalem, entirely of God, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband—for ever the bride of the Lamb. What

an eternity awaits us ! Evil having been put down, all is happy subjection to God ! There is now no wall, no gates. The administration is over, all is now eternal rest with God. The eternal destiny of the church is to be the tabernacle of God. Behold the tabernacle of God is with men. Such is a very brief outline of the destiny of the church of God, the bride of the Lamb. May our blessed Lord use these few thoughts to lead His children to search the scriptures in the presence of God ; in whole-hearted dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we have found the church of the scriptures to be the church of God, composed of every believer born of God since God began the church at Pentecost. And that all believers are now baptized into the one body of Christ. And that to use the word church, as meaning any worldly system, as that of Rome, or England, is not only unscriptural, but calculated to deceive souls.

We have found that true christian ministry is direct from Christ, the ascended head of the church ; that these gifts of Christ were never ordained, even by the apostles, and never should be ordained by men. To do so is to set aside the high privilege and administration of Christ. We have found no authority in the word of God for such a person as a clergyman or minister, over either a parish or a church.

We have found that the constitution of the church was, first, the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. Secondly, He using whom He will of the gifts in the assembly. And though all Christendom has set aside the church constitution as found in scripture, yet we find no reason why we should

give up the word of God to follow the traditions of men.

We have found the first man who did refuse the order of God in the fellowship and ministry of his brethren, in order to establish his own clerical pre-eminence, was strongly condemned by the inspired Apostle John. We have found that the dreams of men, as to the church being an improver of this present evil world, to be all false. That the destiny of the church is entirely heavenly. And it will soon be taken away from this dark night of sin and sorrow. The home above is prepared ; the Man in the glory is waiting the moment when He shall rise and call us up to the skies. As Isaac waited for his Rebecca, so waits our precious Lord. Soon we shall meet, to part no more. For ever with the Lord.

C. S.

