

THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about
with truth.”—Eph. vi.

VOL. VII.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW, E. C.

1863.

PRINTED BY
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW, E. C.

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THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

WATCHMAN! WHAT OF THE
NIGHT?

Isaiah xxi. 11, 12.

HERE and there in Scripture we find different minds brought into contact with the same moral perplexity. For instance, *the prosperity of the wicked*; and we see the different way in which this perplexity was dealt with.

Jeremiah took it at once to God, as a thing too hard for himself. This was dealing rightly and religiously with it. (See Jer. xii.)

David was overwhelmed by it, and spoke impatiently under it. His soul, however, was sweetly restored at the last. (See Psalm lxxiii.)

Ecclesiastes contemplates the wicked taking advantage of God's long-suffering, or delay, in judging the works of

iniquity, leaving man still to prosper in his wickedness. (See viii. 11.)

Malachi speaks of a generation who exceed even this, challenging the God of judgment because of this same thing, the prosperity of the wicked. (See ii. 27; iii. 14, 15.)

These are instances of what I mean; the same moral perplexity differently dealt with by different minds. But this last case from *Malachi* shows exceeding wickedness. Judgment is scoffed at, the thought of it, as it were, ridiculed, because evil-doers were still prospering—and this naturally introduces us to a meditation on *Isaiah* xxi. 11, 12.

Dumah or Idumæa, the land of Esau, was the land of the profane one, the man of the world, the infidel. The voice of the scorner is heard in that land: it challenges one of God's watchmen, asking, "What of the night?"

This tells us, that that watchman had been already talking of the night. And this evidences his faithfulness to his commission; for a part of our testimony, under the Spirit, is to "the night"—

the present night-time of man's world, or the coming solemn, dark, night-time of God's judgments. The very challenge of the profane Edomite, I say, evidences that the watchmen had been faithful, that he both understood and discharged his ministry. Prophets and apostles largely tell us of "the night." They speak abundantly of judgment preceding and introducing the kingdom or the age of glory; and the watchman here challenged had been in their company, in "the goodly fellowship of the prophets." And he is not one who has to recal his words. Having already spoken of the night, he still speaks of it; for in answer to the challenge he says, "the morning cometh and also the night." He can talk of "the morning," it is true, but he will not refuse to tell of "the night" also, however the thought of it may be scorned. Glory in the time of the Lord's presence, or in the morning of His appearing, will come; but the dark, solemn season of judgment must go before it, as all the prophets witness.

This is the watchman's *faithfulness*. He maintains his testimony to "the night," though telling of "the morning" likewise. He declares that judgment is coming, as well as the kingdom in its glory. But there must be *grace* as well as faithfulness in the watchman's ministry; he therefore has a word for the scorner's conscience. It could not satisfy him to tell of the terrors of judgment without some seasonable word of warning, some "seeking to persuade men," as the apostle says. (2 Cor. v. 11.) Accordingly he adds here, in answer to the Edomite's challenge, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come." He warns the scoffer to be of another mind: and if he enquire at all, to enquire in a due spirit, a spirit of repentance; to "return" from his mocking of God's servant and his testimony, and to "come" in a believing, worshipping mind to lay his question before the Lord.

All this constitutes something beautiful. This combination of faithfulness and grace gives us a fine sample, though so short and small, of the ministry of

all watchmen under the Spirit of God. He insists on the truth of God, and will not qualify it, but seeks likewise to press it on the acceptance of the conscience of sinners.

Now, 2 Peter iii. is called to mind by this short, impressive oracle on Dumah in Isaiah xxi. For in that chapter we listen to the voice of a scoffer again, and again get the answer of the Spirit of God.

The scoffer challenges the promise of the Lord's coming. And this evidences that such a promise had been part of the previous testimony—just, as I was observing, the challenge of the Edomite in Isaiah xxi. evidenced that the watchman had been already talking of the night. And the scoffer here would make good his challenge by a fair piece of reasoning, as it is judged to be. "Where is the promise of his coming?" he tauntingly asks; and then he says, "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." They dispute with the mystery of the Lord's coming on

the authority of the general course of nature, and of national events; and all this is in the spirit of "Watchman, what of the night?"

The apostle answers. He lets this scorner know, that things from the beginning of the creation (as the scorner himself had spoken) had taken their course, not by mere force of cause and effect, and established laws and analogies, but that all, in successive ages, had depended on divine good pleasure or the word of God; that by that word, the heavens were of old and the earth also; that by the same word the flood had come; and that by the same word we have now another heaven and earth which waits its doom by fire at the pleasure of the same word of God.

This is a fine answer from this New Testament Watchman to the Edomite of his day. And having done this, he turns to give exhortations to the saints, on the ground of coming judgment and coming glory; that is, on the ground of "the night" and "the morning" of the prophet. And he would fain have them

“grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour,” and hold to their steadfastness of faith and hope in the midst of the reasonings of the scoffers. And, further, he would have them able to interpret the delay of this coming which the scoffers were rebuking, and resolve it into the most blessed and gracious of all purposes, “the salvation of God.”

I do indeed read this chapter from Peter as a fine New Testament scripture in connexion with the oracle of Isaiah over the land of Edom. The scoffer of the last days of Christendom is found in company with the profane Edomite in the days of the kings of Israel. And I ask, is not the present, among other characters which it bears, a day of Edomite profaneness and scorning, and a day when the Lord's watchmen, like Isaiah and like Peter, should know what to do and how to answer? Surely this is so. Who can mistake it? Present times are full of meaning. Political revolutions and christian activities are giving them a character which is far out of the common.

In the Lord's dealings with the earth, it has always been "the night" and "the morning"—the morning of glory or the day of the kingdom, and the night of judgment clearing the way and cleansing the scene.

In Noah's time this was so—the judgment by the deluge went forth and did its work, and then the new world shone out. The sword of Joshua judged the nations of Canaan, and then the land was divided among the tribes, and the glory seated itself there. David's victories cleared the way for the throne of Solomon. And so with the world or the earth now. Night is in the prospect, the Apocalyptic night—the judgments, whether under seals, trumpets, or vials, which the Apocalypse discloses. And morning is likewise in the prospect, the Apocalyptic morning—the kingdom where the saints shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years; and the bride in her beauty shall descend, having the glory in her. So that if any enquire, "What of the night?" as far as the future of *the earth* is concerned,

the answer still is, "The morning cometh and also the night."*

A SERIES.

No. 4.

THE OLD AND NEW NATURE: THEIR DISTINCTION AND THE ACTION OF EACH.

Of all subjects affecting us as Christians, there is possibly none of which we are so ignorant in practice as in our ability to distinguish between the old and the new nature, and to ascribe each motive which passes through our minds, and each act performed by us to its proper source. If there be some motives and acts so distinctly marked that it is comparatively easy to determine them, that only proves that it is the lack of spiritual discernment that prevents us from determining all. Nay more, it proves that the vigour of our spiritual life may be measured by our ability to draw this line of distinction, for "the

* I speak not of the future or the prospect of the Church. The morning star shines therein.

spiritual man discerneth all things." Alas! we know how little we have attained to this; and yet, as I have already shown, our actual place is in the Spirit, and not in the flesh.

What, then, let us enquire in the first place, is this new nature which is imparted to us, and what is the relation and antagonism which the old man bears to it? Formed in us by the Holy Ghost, it is nothing less than the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect man, of which we partake in virtue of union with Him through His death and resurrection, by which He consigned the old man to the grave, and became the head of a new creation in the power of an endless life. It is *His very nature*, therefore called in 2 Peter i. "the divine nature," and our conformity to His image, for which we are left down here, is not brought about by any fresh communication of that nature, but by the development of that which we have already received. This development is through the operation of the Holy Ghost, which, though distinct from the

new man, is its power of action. Pure and holy a thing though it be, it is nevertheless necessary that the Holy Ghost, who planted it in the ungenial soil of fallen man, should give it that activity, development, and power necessary to maintain its due supremacy over the resisting elements, which it has continually to encounter. The gradual subjugation of the old nature to itself results in the conformity of the whole man, more or less, to the image of Him whose nature is thus possessed, and whom, when we see, we shall be like, not in the inner principle only, but in body, soul, and spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ walked about the earth as fulfilling every duty to humanity; and though Himself above man, yet as a real man walked with God on the earth. He is the head of the new creation, and as it is His nature, *as such*, that I possess, any feeling or act of mine which He would not have felt or done cannot properly be called an emanation of the new nature. He was perfectly human and possessed every feeling and

capacity proper to *sinless, unfallen* humanity. To us, as fallen, there are certain conditions allowed, because of human infirmity, not evil in themselves, (unless taken up in the carnal mind,) which nevertheless we must not confound with the new nature.

All the activities of humanity ruled by the will of the flesh is what Scripture calls the old man, and this I have already shown to be alienated in feeling against God. (See No. 1 of this Series.) By this will of the flesh my mind and body in nature have been controlled and used: to it they have naturally yielded, so much so that it is extraneous and strange for either to respond to any other rule. But this is what both mind and body are required to do when I am born again, and when the Spirit, having planted the nature of Christ in me, sets up His rule, and the claim of that nature for due supremacy. The mind and body, hitherto accustomed to the rule of the old man which is contrary to God, used and tenanted by that which is against God, is now demanded by the

new man as a channel and expression for itself. The members, heretofore yielded as "instruments of unrighteousness," must now be instruments of righteousness, yielded to God as those alive from the dead. What a transition is this! What a mighty work to achieve! For not only is the old man in actual possession, but it has the advantage of addressing itself to the human mind, and through it to the human body, in a way that the new cannot; that is to say, the will of the flesh addresses a man's mind in such a form as to make *himself* the object, (and we know how captivating this is to any being,) while the Spirit of God addresses the mind, making *God* the object; its starting point being Christ's lordship and ownership of both body and mind. We must remember too that the body and mind have undergone a change since the fall, apart from the question of actual sin, the body being liable to death and subject to continual infirmity, and the mind, through the action of conscience, being always

uneasy, and apprehensive too of death in a way entirely unknown to lower animals; so that each is all the more ready a channel for the will of the flesh, the first action of which is to make man, and not God, its object.

Now in the Christian there is the introduction of another existence, even the life of Christ, and with this new existence the nature of a perfect man, which now by the Spirit of God would manifest itself through the mind and body of man, though deteriorated and fallen. The superior man is planted in the inferior; the holy thing in the failing vessel, and it is through the organs and machinery, so to speak, of the inferior, that the power and fashion of the superior must be developed; just as though a mill, which having hitherto been worked by horses to grind gunpowder, should now be worked by water or electricity to grind wheat. The mill is still the same, only impelled by a different power and for a different end. But this simile fails as a due illustration, for we must remember that the human

machine is not like the mill, vacated by the old power on the introduction of the new, but that the former remains as an antagonistic principle and power, though gradually yielding in proportion as the new maintains its ground and place.

God having made man in His own image and likeness, that image must have been one adapted and suited for the expression of God's mind on the earth; but when the formation or machinery became corrupted in the principle which worked it, it was used *against* God instead of *for* Him, so that a new principle and nature is required to reset the instrument to its last key and harmony. This new nature demands an expression for itself through the earthen vessel, which, though suitably formed, was diverted by an evil principle from its primitive use. The new man is derived from Him who has borne the judgment due to the old man, and therefore He now claims by His Spirit to develop a perfect man derived from Himself, in that very body and mind which is still occupied by the principle

of self-dependence and alienation from God.

If I have succeeded in making this elementary truth at all clear to the apprehension, it will be seen how it cuts to the root of all the false notions of human perfection now afloat in the world; for in the light of this truth, what is it that man seeks to improve and to perfect? A thing so corrupt in principle, that all education and knowledge communicated to it is only made subservient to the exaltation of itself. Turning everything acquired to its own glory, it is ready to receive any knowledge which will contribute to its own elevation.

Even God's revelation will be listened to and received so far as its light may serve to minister to this one burning desire of the old man; and from his avidity and readiness to adopt truth and light, even from God, arises one of the greatest difficulties to a true judgment or distinguishing between the action of the old nature and the new; which, though so opposite in principle, are often so similar in expression.

In order to form this judgment, it is most important to understand clearly what we have already stated, even that it is through the mind and body of the inferior man that the Spirit of God would develop the ability and grace of the superior. We shall thus perceive the nature of the difficulties with which we have to contend, and apply the remedies with the earnestness of one who feels its need of them.

Let us, then, consider the difficulties. The chief and leading cause of confusion in our minds arises from the fact, that all the new motives and acts must flow through the old channel; that channel which has hitherto served as an egress for the unholy ones, and which, alas! still does, more or less. Were we provided with a new intellect, and a new body, as a channel for the good—leaving the old for its accustomed evil—judgment and discrimination would be easy enough; but we are called as Christians to do the same things perhaps as other men do, but with different motives and power; so that two acts, similar in their

expression, may be performed by two different natures, and to all intents and purposes may appear the same. But why (a soul may reason) should I enquire into the motive since my act meets the case? *Why?* Because if the motive be from the old man, you have departed from the divine nature as your spring of action, and the consequences, like the fruits of a tree, will betray you; (for eventualities always disclose the origin;) while your own spirit has forfeited the strength which it would assuredly have possessed, had it acted under the Spirit of God.

The great difficulty, then, as to discrimination consists in the sameness of the acts, which, regarded merely as to themselves, would never enable me to judge whether I am acting in the flesh or in the Spirit. Of course, I do not speak now of evil ones, which can easily be distinguished, but it is where the difference is *least* that judgment is *most* required. And how many acts, really good in themselves, would, when exposed to this test, be viewed by the

spiritual mind as not only worthless but evil, because having their spring in the old man, whose object and centre is self. The acts by which Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, were the same to all appearance as his own. It is the same body and mind which are ruled by two entirely-opposite powers, but with this important difference, (which leads us to another landing in the tower of difficulty,) that the inferior power is continually filching from the intelligence contributed by the superior in order to baffle it; that is to say, my old man learns manners, appropriates feelings, and gleans intelligence from the new, in order to supplant it in excellence, and thus exert a counteracting influence over my mind; Satan aiding, when it is worth his while, in order to seduce me under the carnal motive which seeks *self*, and away from the divine one which seeks *Christ*.

The more we pursue this source of difficulty, the more we shall see that it is that from which we suffer most, and which most warps our judgment. It is hard to believe that the very same act

may be performed by the same person, from motives so widely diverse, that they spring from two different and *opposite* principles of existence: one, human and corrupt; the other, divine and holy: one, objectively for self; the other, objectively for Christ.

Another difficulty less common and more easily detected, is when the mind has received a right idea as to any act, a real suggestion, it may be, from the new man, and is impressed as to the goodness and rightness of the object to be attained; but instead of waiting on God for the execution of it, which would insure its being carried out in the power of the Holy Ghost, the mind still, in a measure, under the influence of the old man, essays to undertake it according to the natural will, and that will must necessarily suggest some mode of execution which will distinguish *self*. Thus the carnal mind will make use of and seek to mar the very emanations of the new nature, and will often succeed; for that nature, holy though it be, is, as we have seen, as dependent on the Holy

Spirit for action and development as the old man is on the adversary, who ever seeks to minister to its will and lusts.

Moses, in his first attempt to deliver his brethren, is an instance of this; he stumbled at this difficulty, and we see, what lengthened education he required before he learned God's way for executing the idea, received from a divine source, but undertaken in the energy of human will. Each order of difficulty requires in God's school a distinct order of discipline. But, interesting as is the subject, it is not my purpose to trace it here, so I will only observe, that when the idea is divine, having its spring in the new man, we may be sure that, however delayed by the intrusion of our natural will, it will be executed sooner or later, according to its own instincts and in the power of the Spirit; but if its source be in the old man, however good and plausible the idea, it must be brought to nought. For the Holy Ghost asserts the claim of that nature which He has Himself planted in us, to generate all ideas, as well as to carry them

out according to God through His power and operation.

I now turn to the remedies or divine means which are afforded us in order successfully to overcome these difficulties. In the first place, if the old man is "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," if it always acts from and for itself, its energy being the will of the flesh, it is clear that God's *expressed* will is the first and simplest means of escape from it. Man, by nature, has no one superior to himself to turn to for counsel or help. Satan will only aid him to greater distance and estrangement from all that is good and true: so if I want to be independent of that nature in me, which is opposed to God, I must not listen to its suggestions for a single moment, but wait on God for instruction in everything. The unchangeable, unalterable purpose of my soul must be not to adopt an idea of any thing but from God and His word. The word of God, searched and waited on for the enunciation and direction of every *idea*, is the first of remedies. It

is the very food of the new man, and I cannot consider myself completely under the control of it until I can echo the words of our Lord; words which all the discipline *and mercies* of the wilderness during forty years were to produce in the soul of God's people as their great result: "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

In conjunction with this there is another remedy embodied in that exhortation of the apostle, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Self-denial is absolutely necessary to enable me to discern and respond to, that "good, acceptable, and perfect will of God" which my new man delights in, but which my old man wars against. I must "keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," or its

machinery will be necessarily engaged in the current and will of the old man; and while occupied with the inferior, it is never at the disposal of the superior. How many know a quantity of truth which is neither expressed nor practised by them, simply because they are hindered from seeing its light and value on account of some worldly influence or attraction, which must needs be subdued, before the body and mind will be fit expositors of the truth. I may not know what the new nature is claiming or requiring of me; but whether I know it or not, there will be no outlet or opportunity for its action, if I am indulging myself according to the old. Hence the many vexations and sorrows which befall saints in their path here below: for we must be taught, not only the vanity of our own desires, apart from God's mind, but also, like Moses, the futility of our own plans even to carry out God's mind. We must relinquish, not only the offspring of the old man, but the investiture with which he would present and make use of the

offspring of the new. In the one instance we learn that all flesh is grass; in the other, that flesh will appropriate anything, however good and pure, for its own ends; and that our plans, like the cart provided for the ark, (2 Sam. vi. 3,) will involve us in greater trouble.

God continually allows me, when I am acting in the will and insubjection of my old nature, to carry out my own counsel until I find out the folly and insufficiency of it; but for the subject soul there is one golden rule by which its course may be determined, be the perplexity ever so great. Some true souls think, when two opposite courses are open to them, that if they take the one contrary to their natural inclinations, it is sure to be right; but that is by no means a sure guide—the old man is so subtle, that it will not do to measure things either by his tastes or distastes. Others, again, seek counsel of their brethren which can seldom be relied on, and even when sound, tends to cloud the individual exercise of the soul with God. Whereas, one simple question, if asked in integrity

of heart, will resolve all such problems; viz., "Which of the two courses open to me is objectively for the glory of Christ?" Now, if I do not know what *is* for the glory of Christ, I am not walking with Him; and if not walking with Him, I cannot apply this rule. But in that case I cannot be honestly seeking His will: I am walking in the will of my old man, which must be in abeyance, before I can determine any questions or courses for the glory of Christ.

I have but briefly touched on the headings of this subject, so especially important in this day, which is so rife with delusions as to human perfection. The carnal mind has assumed for man a perfection, the idea of which is borrowed from God's revelation. The very manifestation of Christ in flesh—He who is the sole head and source of all perfection—is made use of to help the natural man to exalt himself into greater distinction and independence of God, by borrowing, without acknowledging, the glories of the only son of God. And so incorrigible is his desire of self-

exaltation, that even where he does in any measure acknowledge those glories, he will not allow that fallen man can only become partaker of them by a new creation, founded on the consignment of the old nature, root and branch, to the grave of Him who suffered in the flesh for this end, and who reproduces those glories in redeemed man; not in virtue of having assumed human nature as an *incarnate* Saviour, but by bearing its penalty and judgment, which at once passes sentence on the old, and provides a new and risen, life to all who believe.

That we as Christians partake of a perfect humanity is incontrovertibly true; but if we desire to display this nature of Christ—the new, the heavenly man—we must yield to His word in everything, live by His counsel, and deny and mortify the members of the old man, which is corrupt according to its deceitful lusts.

May we seek to walk humbly with our God, denying our flesh, that it may be no barrier to the expression of the divine nature, and rejoicing that “through

glory and virtue “are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

THE STANDING AND PORTION OF A BELIEVER.

Romans v.

The first part of this chapter unfolds our present portion, and then the end of the chapter shews the ground on which we can boast of this standing. We have peace: we stand in grace, and are rejoicing in hope of the glory. Peace as to what concerned the old nature—favour as to present relationship, and we can rejoice in certain things in hope of the glory to come, and in tribulations by the way. They make the hope the brighter and things clearer along the road; and another thing of joy on the road is, “joy in God,” in God Himself. The spring of all is grace reigning, and the foundation of all is “the obedience of One.”

Look first at what the christian state is. Here we see how little real Christians have got hold of this—how little their state is a settled, defined thing. The portion of the Christian is peace: it is a settled thing. He is justified as to all the evil and sin that requires this justification. Then, as to our relationship with God, it is grace (that is the fountain, too); but if I ever think of God, it is peace as to the past—that is negative; and the present standing is grace—favour. Then, as to the future, I have nothing to look forward to but glory. I do not hope for righteousness; I do not hope for life; I do not hope for peace—I have all this; but I hope for glory, that I have not yet. The hope of glory—that is the key to everything. I may have tribulations—plenty, perhaps; but “tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God” not only is proved in the gift of His Son, but is brought into me by the Holy Ghost: we have the joy of it by the Spirit in us. GOD’S LOVE

is shed abroad in our hearts: I know His love, delight in His love, lean on His love. Then I can rejoice in tribulations.

And we not only can rejoice in what He has given—peace, grace, hope; but we can delight in Himself. Every day I get tokens of this love; but to delight in Himself is the best thing. Then I can go on, even counting the tribulations by the way greater prize than the blessings.

Do you think the purpose of God, and the blessed Son spent on us, and the Holy Ghost sent down, is to have no result? Are we to be left uncertain whether God loves us or not? Has the light come to leave us in the dark? No: it is never His purpose to leave a heart uncertain as to its relationship with Himself. No heart would have right affections without a knowledge of its relationships. A child brought into a house, not knowing whether those it is brought to are its parents or not, has not the affections of a child toward them. A soul born of God, but not

knowing its relationship, cannot have the play of holy affections proper to it.

“Sin has reigned unto death.” It has been master of the scene. All have departed from God, intellectually and otherwise. Bring God in where men are enjoying themselves, and what enjoyment of God would they find? Sin is reigning; man’s will is away from God. Man has turned his back on God. There is not one thing in man’s moral nature that does not shut out God. Does conscience help the will? No: conscience never brings a man to God; it drives him away. “Sin reigns unto death.” What is to be done? Confess you are what you are. Confess that you are slaves to it. You cannot hide it from God: do not hide it from yourselves. Notice the contrast of sin reigning: it is not righteousness reigning, but grace reigning. There is one who is above the sin, and that is God. He is above it in love: that is what grace is—having to do with sin, but being above it—that which can love, though perfectly holy, because above the sin.

That was first manifested in the Son coming into the world. Sin was complete when He came, and that was the reason He came. Because man had no power to get out of it, Christ came to take him out. Where do I learn that "God is love?" I know it in the consciousness of my sins being put away. You say, "I cannot get out of them." Christ came to take you out. You say, "I am defiled by sin." "That is the reason I came," says the Lord. No man can be a truthful man but the believer in grace. Then is God content to have him in his sins? No. "Grace reigns through righteousness." "He was made sin for us." God has dealt with the sin that is pressing on my conscience, and the sin is perfectly put away through the cross. If I look at my sins, I look at the cross; if I look at my position before God, I look at Him who is taken into God's presence; "through the obedience of one many are made righteous." You must be content to say, In me is no good thing; no righteousness in us.

LUKE IV., V.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I hardly know whether the thoughts I send you suit your little journal, but trust that all that unfolds the way the blessed Lord presented Himself on the earth, the connexion of the Old Testament with the New, and the revealing of God in man upon the earth, will be profitable to some of your readers at least.

I forward to you therefore some remarks on the Gospel of Luke, flowing from thoughts which have arisen in my mind while lately reading it. There are two great subjects in the life of the blessed Lord which Luke brings out: the fulfilment of promise, and the revelation of God in grace in the "Son of man." These are presented to us in the history in a very interesting way. I will notice this as displayed in chapters iv. and v.

In chapter iv. the Spirit of God has shown us the Blessed One led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, victorious in trial, as the

first man had failed in it. He returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, having first bound the strong man. Let me remark here, in passing, how faithfulness in trial and temptation shows the power of the Spirit as much as the energy of action. Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted, overcame Satan by the word through the Spirit, and returned in its power, working miracles and casting out devils. But the power had been exercised all through the temptation, only in standing fast. (See Eph. vi.) Therein He had overcome Satan, baffled his power, really bound the strong man, and then had only to spoil his goods. He used too the weapon we have to use, the word of God; only we must remark that we learn from Eph. vi., that to use the word, we must first have all the defensive armour, that is, the state of the soul must be right. Christ, of course, was perfect and used it perfectly. In the measure of our spirituality and uprightness we shall be able to wield this blessed weapon. But here even the sword was a defensive weapon. He met

the wiles of Satan by it. Whatever reasonings or scriptures Satan may use, if we are spiritual enough to use it, the word of God suffices to confound him.

But to turn to my more direct subject.

The Lord now stood as man, anointed of the Holy Ghost, having overcome Satan, to make good the grace and goodness of God amongst men, and specially first amongst the Jews; but the glory of His divine person was not to be hid. But first He presents Himself as the anointed man, fulfilling all that had been promised in grace. I must remark another point. The Lord looks for rejection: and this it will be seen is the case in both the characters in which He presents Himself. First, then, as the anointed man. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Thus He presents Himself

as the fulfiller of promise, announcing the favourable and gracious time of God's mercy in His own person. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." But at the same time He tells them that He will be rejected. A prophet has not honour in his own country. But He adds that grace, as grace, passed beyond the limits of the Jews; that God was sovereign in His goodness, and of old had sent help to two Gentiles, while many remained in sorrow in rebellious Israel. This the haughty Jews would not bear, and, gracious as His words had been, they are now ready to destroy Him for preaching a grace which Israel might lose all part in, as rejecting Him, and the Gentile get blessing by. They are ready to destroy Him, but it was not the time, and He passed through the midst of them.

Now see the character in which the devils own Him; how it meets this character in which He was really come. How sad a picture! Devils perforce own Him; men reject Him with hatred. It is remarkable how these evil spirits own Him

according to the truth, (as we may remember the spirit of divination did Paul,) but surely only as dreading, and, if they could have done so, avoiding His power. "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." It was the reluctant owning of a power they could not avoid. The time was not come to cast them into the pit, but to deliver man. He came out of the man at Jesus's word. But this title was a prophetic one of Jesus; and this title as summing up all the mercies of God. It is unfolded in Psalm lxxxix. The word "mercies" in the first verse of that psalm, is the same as "Holy One" in verse 19. "Holy One" in verse 18 is quite different. Mercy was to be built up for ever, the psalm declares. How? "Thou spakest in vision of (not to, I think, but about, as we see that of the prophecy, Psalm lxxii., "A Psalm about Solomon,") thy Holy One," thy gracious One, in whom help and mercy is summed up. "I have laid help upon One that is

mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant," &c. Here, no doubt, the immediate subject is David; but in the mind of God a greater, even Christ, is here. The evil spirit owns that this Holy One is there in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Help was indeed laid upon the Mighty One, who having overcome Satan wholly, could have delivered man from all the miserable fruits of his power, even death itself; but man would have none of Him. He must be redeemed or lost.

Next, in this fourth chapter, when healing many, the devils who are cast out own Him as the Christ the Son of God. This was owning His title as promised to Israel in Psalm ii.; but which also witnessed to His rejection. Thus the power of present delivering goodness, in the promised One, was there. He is owned the Holy One of God, in whom mercies came to Israel; as the Christ and Son of God spoken of in Psalm ii. But in His own country He is not received. The prejudices and passions of

man rise up against grace and this gracious One, while the devils own Him, but through dread; a strange but solemn picture! They could not but know Him. But what is knowledge when only such? Those He really came to would not receive Him.

In chapter v. He is seen in another character. He reveals, and is, Jehovah. In the miraculous draught of fishes He makes Himself known to the conscience of Peter. He sees the Lord in it, and acknowledges Himself a sinful man, unfit for His presence. This is always the effect of the revelation of God to us, and indeed of nothing else. Jesus speaks words of grace, "Fear not." From henceforth he should catch men. In what follows He heals the leper, which was Jehovah's work alone. But there was a special circumstance connected with this, full of blessed significance. The leper recognized His power, but was not sure of His goodness or willingness to help him. "Lord, [he says] if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The Lord does not merely say He is willing,

He puts forth His hand and touches him. Now, if a man touched a leper he too was unclean, and must be put out of the camp. But here was a divine person come down, Jehovah, who could cleanse. One who could say, "*I will;*" "*be.*" One who could not be defiled, but had for that very reason come down to touch the defiled one, and remove the defilement. He was Jehovah, come as man, to touch, so to speak, the sinner in grace. Jesus was one whose holiness was so perfect, as God become man, that He could carry divine love to the vilest; carry it wherever a need or a sorrow was, and as love touch the defiled, not to become so, but to heal. It is a wonderful picture of what Christ, Jehovah, present to heal was in this world. Thus revealing Himself to the conscience, and doing a divine work in love, in what was a figure of cleansing from sin, mark Him out as Jehovah in the world in grace.

He withdraws Himself into the wilderness and prays; ever the dependant, as the obedient and victorious man. But other elements of divine grace are yet

to be observed here. He was sitting with doctors of the law, ready to object to grace, and ignorant of how the Son of God had in manhood visited this sinful world in the power and title of divine grace. One sick of the palsy is brought to Him by faith. He goes to the root of all sorrow, and says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The question is not here how through the precious death of Christ forgiveness was consistent with divine righteousness and glorified it. What is here revealed, is Jehovah present in full unmingled grace. As the testimony and witness of this, the Lord does what is ascribed to Jehovah in Psalm ciii., along with the forgiveness of sins. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; and healeth all thy diseases."

Lastly, the Lord shows, as the friend of publicans and sinners, that He had come in sovereign grace to gather, in the power of good, not looking for it in man. But thus also He must be rejected. This new wine, for it was so, could not be put into old bottles; Judaism could not receive and be the vessel of sovereign

grace; nor could those who were used to Judaism easily receive the new wine of the gospel and Spirit of God. And so it ever is in all ages.

Ever affectionately yours,

J. N. D.

SANCTIFICATION BY THE TRUTH.

When we look into the practical details of the Epistles, and the more carefully we do so, the more constantly, nay invariably, do we find, that it is "the truth" which is used in the cultivation of christian character, and as the sanction and spring of godly behaviour.

The Lord, having finished the work that was given Him to do, committed the keeping and the sanctifying of His people to the Father; desiring that they might be kept through His name, and sanctified by His truth. (John xvii.) This desire the Holy Ghost acts on in the Epistles; for again I say, it is "the truth" which is there always used in

the sanctification of the elect, or in the formation of christian character.

We find all the penmen of the Spirit, as in the Epistles of the New Testament, doing this. We find hope, mercies, promises, the law of liberty, the grace that bringeth salvation, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and things of like kind with these, used in this sanctification of the elect, all serving to this end, all made to be the instruments for carrying on the husbandry and culture of the saints. And these are parts of "the truth." The fruit of them in the soul and life is righteousness and holiness of truth. (Eph. iv. 24.) And so much is this so in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, that there "the coming of the Lord," another part of "the truth," is first employed in forming and cherishing *several different* features of saintly character, and then for the *general* cultivation of living, practical Christianity in spirit, soul, and body. (See 1 Thess.)

In this way, and it is full of beauty and interest, we see the desire of the

Lord Jesus, that this people should be sanctified by the truth, answered by the Spirit when He comes, in His day, to deal with the elect, and carry on their education, as we speak.

There is no using of *law* to form christian character. Could we, I ask, admit the thought that the Lord, having ransomed us by Himself, by His own most precious blood, and having made us children of the Father, giving us His own Spirit, the Spirit of the Son, could, after that, commit us to Moses to be kept and educated? What say our souls to such a thought? Are we prepared to admit that the Lord would do this? Nay, and it is nowhere in the Epistles found that He does. The conclusions which our own souls would draw, and the way of the Holy Ghost in the Epistles, harmonize. All is in consistent elevation of thought and purpose. And I may say, it is happy to see, though surely it is what we might expect to see, that the Spirit effectuates the Son's desire, and works according to it.

I may say that we get a fine and vivid illustration of this in 2 Cor. iii. 5.

In the first of these chapters the apostle contemplates the soul, as I may speak, in the presence of *the law*, and then in the presence of *the truth*. In the presence of the law the man has his face veiled. He does not affect to be learning one single lesson there. He is abashed rather and confounded. His face is in his hands. The law was commissioned to lay the sentence of death in man as a responsible moral agent, to expose and convict him; and it has answered its end in us, when it leaves us in the sense of utter hopelessness. This was its operation when, at the very beginning, it was announced in the hearing of the camp of Israel, and this was its operation in an individual soul in these last days of the New Testament, as we see drawn out before us in Rom. vii. (See Ex. xx. 18—20; Deut. v. 22—29.)

Indeed this is so. With a veiled face we are to listen to the law. We are not to go to it to learn lessons.

The law is not made for a righteous man; but for the lawless and disobedient. We are to be in the presence of it, that we may be convicted by it, and find out that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. A veiled face, again I say, becomes us there. We are not to affect that we learn lessons there, but that we simply take the sentence of death into ourselves; and as we stand before it, cry out, with the camp at Mount Sinai, "Let not God speak with us;" or with Paul, "O wretched man that I am." This is its business with me, and this is my answer to it. But if I set myself before it to learn my lesson, and then go away to do my duty accordingly, I am misusing it, and not understanding the veiled face of Moses.

But, on the other hand, in this very same chapter, 2 Cor. iii., we see the apostle with an open, unveiled face before the glory of the Lord Jesus as that glory shines in the gospel, or "the truth;" and *there* it is we see him learning his lessons. He makes it his aim and business so to stand in the presence

of that glory, that he may take off and bear away the image or reflection of it, and be, as he speaks, "a manifestation" of it.

It is there, then, that I find Paul learning his lessons, and not before the law. It is there I find him not with a veiled face, but with an open face; and then in the chapters which follow (2 Cor. iv. v.) he lets us know some of the lessons he had learnt there, and how he was exercising himself in them. Having received mercy, he fainted not, neither did he walk in craftiness, nor handle the word of God deceitfully. This is a sample of the lessons he had learnt, and of the teacher that had taught him. The mercy he had received was his teacher, and he had learnt not to faint. The light of the glory he had looked at, he goes on to tell us, had shone into his heart and was breaking forth with many a beam of moral brightness and beauty. The life of Jesus was manifest in His body and in his mortal flesh. Did the Lord live for others? The apostle through grace is able to say that he

himself fainted not under ministerial labours and sorrows, if others got blessing. Death might work in him, if only thereby life worked in them. There had been a joy set before Christ, in the hope of which He had endured the cross: there was the same, in his way and measure, in the apostle, by reason of which he counted his afflictions to be light. Jesus believed and spoke; Paul also believed and spoke. This surely was learning lessons of the truth. He apprehended also, as he goes on to tell us, the truth of a coming judgment, when all things would be manifested; and by that truth he was led to aim at acceptability with Christ. He knew the terror of the Lord; and by that he would be an earnest-hearted witness to his fellow-sinners. He knew the death of Christ for sinners; and by that he was ready no longer to live to himself, but to Him who had died for him. And surely all this was sanctification by the truth. This was an exhibition of one who was learning lessons as he stood before the glory of God in the face of

Jesus Christ, and stood there with unveiled face. This was "a manifestation of the truth," as he speaks here.

These chapters (2 Cor. iii.—v.) are truly wonderful.

And as to the flesh, at the close of them, he tells us, that he knew no man after it. And I ask, if he knew no man after the flesh any longer, how could he know the law any longer? If he had ceased to know man after the flesh, how could he but have ceased to know the law? How could he any longer, though he may have been doing so all his life before, use the law as the former of his character? The law addressed itself to man in the flesh. It was made for man in the flesh, in the old creation. It had connexion with Israel, and told Israel of their duties as Israel in the flesh or under the old covenant, standing in moral, independent responsibility, in title, if they could make it out, of their own doings and deservings. Such a state the apostle refuses to know. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh," he says, he himself being a new

creature, part of the new creation, where "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." He was in the divine, eternal system of redemption. This is what that man was who, with open face, was beholding the glory of the Lord.

Could such an one, I ask again, take himself back to the law? Could he return to that schoolmaster, to be educated and have his character formed by him? Or could such an one send us, the saints of God, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, there? He could not, and he does not; nor do any of his fellow-apostles, the inspired penmen of the New Testament, the authorized teachers of the Church of God. No. They send us, as I have said, to "the truth," in all its vast, and fruitful, and various provisions, to "the mercies of God," to "the exceeding great and precious promises," to "hope," to "the law of liberty," to "the grace that bringeth salvation," to "the coming of the Lord," and the like. (See Rom. xii., 2 Cor. vii., 2 Peter i., Titus ii., 1 Thess., James ii.,

1 John iv.) These are the masters from whom we are to learn our lessons. The day of the schoolmaster is past. Tutors and governors have discharged the office they had under the Father. The time appointed by Him for their dismissal has come long since. We are redeemed from under the law, from them, and from the schoolmaster. We are to be sanctified by the truth; to cultivate "the righteousness and holiness of truth;" to put on the new man; to be led of the Spirit, and this is to be not "under the law." (See Gal. v. 18.)

The Holy Ghost, through His servants the penmen of the New Testament, thus answers the desire of the Son which He uttered before the Father ere He left us. "Sanctify them by thy truth." And another illustration of this we get in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle is teaching the saints their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And he prays or desires for them that the Spirit may give them the understanding of all this, the apprehension and sense of this high calling, that they may know the

glory of the hope to which it points, the might of that resurrection-strength which is conducting them on to that hope, the height, length, depth, and breadth of that high, mysterious calling itself, and the surpassing, immeasurable love which is the spring of it all, and which alone can account for it. (See chap. i., iii.) And surely this is desiring their sanctification. To have these prayers for them verified, and realized, and answered in their souls, would surely be their sanctification, their participation in "divine nature;" a result which the law could never have produced; for the best it promised was *human righteousness*, "our righteousness," as Moses himself speaks. (Deut. vi. 25.)

And then in the closing, practical details of this same Epistle to the Ephesians, we find the apostle ever using something of "the truth" to cultivate the tempers and order the ways of the saints he is addressing.

And surely I may add, without asking leave and without fear of contradiction, that the very purpose of the Epistle to

the Colossians is *to keep saints at school to the truth*. The apostle found that the brethren at Colosse were leaving that school for the schools of either the philosophers or Moses; for either the rudiments of the world, or the ordinances of the law; and to keep them still under the culture of the truth, that they might "increase with the increase of God," is his purpose.

What words! Could the law supply the increase of God? What can warrant such language? What can account for it, but the nourishment which the truth provides, and which the Spirit dispenses to the soul?

And now I just ask, if the Lord have ransomed us by His blood, and given us His own Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, and have committed us to the keeping of the Father, and to the sanctifying of the truth; and if the Holy Ghost have accordingly, by the apostles, led us to the truth to learn our lessons, is it to be said, that God has purposed that we are to be in His presence for ever, in righteousness of law? Are we, after all this,

to shine in courts of heavenly glory, as those who are beautiful in the beauty which Moses would have put upon us? Are we to say, He is not now educating us by the law, but He will put us into the righteousness of the law, therein to appear before Him for ever? I cannot receive such a thought—Scripture never inspires it. It would be altogether inconsistent. The desire of the Lord, uttered before the Father, in John xvii., and the whole education of the soul under the Holy Ghost in the Epistles, could never find its proper natural result in such a thing as that. It is in the righteousness of *God*, not in the righteousness of *law*, we shine. We are in the righteousness of God by faith. It is that righteousness which is imputed to us. It is that righteousness we are, “the righteousness of God by faith.” This is the crowning, the perfecting of the whole mystery. All is consistent. We are ransomed by the blood of the Son—we are committed to the keeping of the Father—we are sanctified by the Spirit through the truth—we shine now

and for ever in the righteousness of God.

In His life on earth the Lord Jesus fulfilled *human* righteousness. He magnified the law. He presented to God a sheaf of untainted human fruit. Made not only of a woman, but under the law, He presented man, in His own person, to God, as man ought to be under it. For He came not to destroy it, but to fulfil it. But in and by His death He maintained *divine* righteousness. He glorified God, satisfied all the demands of the throne where righteousness is seated, and vindicated and displayed full divine moral perfection. He presented God to the whole creation in divine moral glory, just and a Justifier, just and having salvation, a just God and a Saviour, which is His proper, His desired glory, the glory He will not give to another, and surely will not allow to be taken from Himself. (Isaiah xlv.)

If I, a sinner, have faith in this blood, or death, or sacrifice of Jesus, God accepts me, myself, my person, in His presence, as this very righteousness, the

righteousness which that sacrifice has maintained, vindicated, and displayed.

A THOUGHT ON JESUS.

It has just struck me that we may continually observe all absence in the Lord to merely please His disciples. He never did that; nay, I am sure that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, as we speak, or of introducing Himself to their favour. I am sure that He did not seek to please; and yet He bound them deeply and intimately to Himself. This was very blessed: and the same thing in any one is always a symptom of moral power.

If we seek to please, we shall scarcely fail to do so. That is true, I doubt not; but nothing can be morally lower. It makes our fellow-creature supreme; and we deal with him as though "his favour was life" to us—which God's is, but *His only*. But to bind one in full confidence to us—to draw the heart—to have ourselves in the esteem and affections of

others, without ever in one single instance having that as our object—this is morally great: for nothing can account for this but that constant course of love which, by necessity of its own nature, tells others that their real interests and prosperity (blessing) are, in deed and in truth, the purpose and desire of our hearts.

And this was the Lord. Nothing that He did told them that He sought to please them; but everything that He did told them that He sought to bless them. And again I say, I believe He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, or of introducing Himself into their favour. And yet He met them graciously and tenderly on many occasions which might have been resented. And both of them, the one as well as the other, came from those springs and sources of moral perfection which took their rise in Him. For if vanity had no part in Him, to put Him to *an effort* to please, *malice* had no part in Him, to make Him quick to resent. He would not be flattered into

graciousness, nor provoked into unkindness.

“THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

Mark iv. 26 to v. 20.

There is nothing more striking in the word of God, as showing its divine authorship, than that, when read with diligence and care, there should be constantly rising up to view some fresh proof, some new and striking feature, of its infinitely-diversified and infinitely-perfect character.

When read with careless indifference, the mind contracts a habit of supposing that all has been learnt from it which it contains, because familiarity with its general contents serves to take off the edge of its interest. It is far otherwise when the habit of daily study keeps the word before the soul.

This thought has been suggested by a recent meditation on the two parables, and two historic scenes in our Lord's life, which are presented in this passage,

and which I will now endeavour briefly to set before my readers.

It may tend to an understanding of the subject, and to give definiteness to our thoughts, if a remark or two be made on the phrase, "the kingdom of God," with which both parables are introduced. In Matthew's Gospel, and peculiar to it, as the Gospel of dispensation, the corresponding phrase is "the kingdom of heaven," or the reign, or rule, of heaven. From the uniform application of the phrase, it is manifest that a distinct dispensational period or state of things is characterized by it. In Matt. iii. 2 we find John the Baptist commencing his preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, by crying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When John was cast into prison, it is said, (iv. 17,) "From that time *Jesus* began to preach, and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" i.e., He announced a new period in God's dealing with Israel, with its own peculiar characteristics, as about to commence. Much is said about it in parables and

otherwise afterward, without attention to which it is impossible that the gospel should be understood.

It was plainly an expectation familiar to the Jews, however much their thoughts were astray as to the nature of "the kingdom" and of the characteristics of its subjects. The phrase itself appears to have taken rise from a prediction in Daniel, if not from an earlier oracle in Deuteronomy, (chap. xi. 21,) in which Israel's blessings are foretold as "the days of heaven upon earth." But Daniel is plain. In chap. ii. 44 it is said, "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom," &c. This, coupled with chap. vii. 13, 14, presents the fact of the kingdom, and the person of him who is said to wield its power. "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the *Son of man* came with the clouds of heaven, and came unto the Ancient of Days; and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom," &c.

The corresponding phrase to that of

Matthew in the other Gospels is "the kingdom of God." To a considerable extent this is interchangeable with that in Matthew, and is often so employed. It is, however, distinctive, and is less knit up with Jewish expectations; and I think it is always used to indicate the moral power connected with the reign, rather than simply the reign itself. Moreover, it runs on in its application to a sphere which lies beyond the apparently-proper range of the kingdom of heaven. We read in 1 Cor. xv. 50, "*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*"

As used by the Lord Jesus in these parables, it marks a definite sphere in this world subject to the operation of God; which commenced, as to time, with His own ministry, and will be terminated by His coming again, in connexion with its final results. There needs no formal proof as to who the sower is, and as little as to who it is that will be present again in the "time of harvest."

The purport of the parable is to show that to the eye of man, after Christ left the scene, as the sower, all goes on apparently in its natural course; and in truth that there would be no personal interference on the part of him who sowed the seed until the time of harvest. The parable represents simply a process in husbandry. A man casts seed into the ground. He sows his field and leaves it. "He sleeps and rises night and day;" i.e., the ordinary circumstances of life go on, and he does not trouble himself about his field. He has sown it, and however indifferent he may appear, the field was sown that in the time of harvest it might be reaped. Meanwhile the processes of nature go on. The seed springs and grows, but he knows not how. It is the result neither of his power nor care. "The earth brings forth fruit of herself." In due time there is the blade and the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. All this is a result apart from man's power, or man's care, or man's cognizance. When the fruit is brought forth

and the harvest is the result of his sowing, immediately he puts in his sickle and reaps, "because the harvest is come." The parable is but a tale of everyday farming life, and is seen in accomplishment in the revolution of every season. The divine instruction is, "*so* is the kingdom of God." The seed was sown by the Son of man. Since then the world has gone on in its ordinary, unheeding course; but ever since the harvest has been advancing.

Man's care, it is true, has had little to do with the matter; but the power that gives the increase has been silently and effectually at work. To the eye of man there is no interference. All seems to have been left to the course of the world; but the process has been going on. The blade has sprung up, the ear has been formed, and the full corn in the ear is at hand, when "the harvest" will bring Him who sowed the field, to be again present in connexion with it to gather the wheat into his garner. "He was once offered to bear the sins of many: [the corn of wheat, the true

sowing for the harvest, has fallen into the ground and died:] and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." But the lesson of the parable is, the absence from the field, and the apparent indifference toward it of the sower, until harvest brings him again into personal concern and interference with it.

The parable of the "grain of mustard seed" presents another aspect of "the kingdom of God," and which indicates that its recognition, in this character, is by the eye of man, like the former.

The historic scenes which follow are intimately connected with the parables, and give the other side of the truth with regard to them. But their elucidation must be deferred to the sequel of the paper.

(To be continued.)

LUKE VII.

(Continued from page 42.)

I do not for the present make any remark on chapter vi. Only we may note that the Lord is gathering distinctly around Himself, apart from the nation, and that He addresses His disciples as thus separated—as those already called to possess the kingdom. But in chapter vii. we have the Lord brought out in a far greater character, and more fully revealed, than as the fulfiller of promise. He is entirely a divine person, and consequently reaches out beyond Judaism, and even human life, in this world. Still the Jews are recognized by the Gentile whom the Lord blesses: and this was right. The Lord did the same. It was the lowliness and submission to God's ways which the knowledge of God, true faith, always produces. Remark here, too, a principle which will be found to shine forth through all the Gospels, namely, that whenever Christ was manifested as God, it was impossible that He could be confined to His relationship to the Jews. God *present* in

His own nature, as love, cannot be confined to the special relationship to a nation to whom He has made promises; although he may, and surely will, faithfully meet them according to promise. This is largely and specially brought out in John; where, indeed, however, the principle reaches further, and thereby assumes another character. The Jews are there looked at, already, in the first chapter, as reprobate, and so treated; though dealt with, still, all through the Gospel. "He came to his own, and his own received him not." The world, too, is viewed as blind. "The world knew him not." It was that phenomenon known only in morals, the light shining in darkness. The effect of this is to bring out the Lord in two characters in that Gospel—first, as God, as light in the world, and as such when forcing the conscience to attend to Him, bringing out the terrible truth that men love darkness rather than light—that they will not have God such as He is. This especially, and formally, in the eighth, when His word is rejected, as

His work is in the ninth. But this makes a turning-point in the Gospel after the first three chapters, which are preface. The first, Christ in nature—Christ incarnate—Christ in work of blessing on earth—Christ (as John Baptist also) calling and gathering on the earth; which reaches on, by His servants, to His millennial presence on earth: in all which, note, no heavenly character or office of Christ is given, as is ever the case in John's writings. The second gives the millennial kingdom. The third what is needed for the kingdom, and heavenly things; where John also brings out His full person and glory in grace. Then, being driven out of Judea, the new order of things is intimated, from God's nature and the Father's love, in the fourth chapter. Thereon, to the end of the seventh, Christ is presented the divine, life-giving Son of God; in incarnation, and as the dying Son of man; the Giver of the Spirit, as the feast of tabernacles, the figure of earthly rest, could not yet be kept by Him. Then, His word being

rejected in the eighth, in the ninth He gives sight, and this brings in effectual grace; and, rejected though He be, He will have His sheep. Here we have not simply God, who is Light in darkness, revealed, but the Father sending the Son in grace. This distinction is always kept up in John. When grace is spoken of it is the Father and the Son; the Father sending the Son. While as mere light it is God. But this expression of Father and Son refers to grace revealed and effectual, not to the love of God in His nature and character. Where this is spoken of it is still God. "God so loved the world." I may follow this gospel and its character more in detail, if it suit you and the Lord so will, another time: but this leads me back to the general truth that Christ as revealing God shines necessarily out beyond Israel. Thus, in a very striking and beautiful example, the Syrophenician woman. There the Lord seems to hold back and confine Himself to Israel. "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "It is not meet to

take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." The poor woman says, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Could He say, God is not so good as you suppose? He has no crumbs for the wretched, who even look to Him through grace? Impossible. It would have been denying, not revealing, God; and her faith is at once met. Remark, too, again here, how lowly faith is and how it submits to God's sovereign will! She owns herself a dog, and the privilege of being near God, as Israel was, as a nation. But her faith pierces through the difficulty, with a want, to Him who revealed God in love; and divine goodness, which had taught her to trust in it, met, could not but meet, that confiding trust.

Now in the seventh chapter of Luke the Lord fully takes the divine place. He is owned by the Gentile as One who can dispose of all, as he himself ordered his soldiers about; and the Lord owns his faith. "I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel." In the next recorded event He goes further in the

display of divine power and goodness. "When the Lord saw her He had compassion on her." That was His first thought; and to the bereaved widow He spoke first, and this was God too, though as man near to her sorrow. But divine power was there too; and a word from Him woke up to conscious life the young man they were about to bury. But power, the fullest, divine power, did not obliterate goodness, nor cannot. God *uses* power, but He *is* love. He delivered him to his mother.

This reached the ears of John. The very dead were raised, and he remained in prison. He sends to know, Is the promised One come? He trusts the word of Him of whom he had heard such things, but he wants to know if He be the One that should come. John is to believe in Christ, not Christ receive testimony from men. But "He that should come" is the promised One. And John is to receive Him, as others, by the testimony which He gave of Himself, as setting right all the sorrows that sin and Satan had brought into the

world, and in grace caring for the poor. But this was more than promise, though it witnessed to the promised One. It proved the presence of One who was love and had all power. But because He manifested God He was the rejected One, and blessed was he who should not be offended in Him. If He came in promise, as man expected Him, it would not have been in the grace of divine power come down in love to every want. But because He did, though His arm was not shortened, "He was despised and rejected of men." However, when John's messengers were gone, the Lord bears testimony to the captive one. He was Jehovah's messenger, sent before His face to prepare His way. But it was really Jehovah who was come. But he who mourned to them, and he who piped to them, were alike rejected by that generation. One class alone received the Lord—the humbled ones who had owned their sinfulness. These intelligently justified God's ways in both John and Christ. But it went far beyond a Messiah: they had morally met

God. They owned they needed repentance; they had deserved the axe. They owned the suitableness of grace. It was not merely Messiah they received. Perhaps, in some of the happiest cases, they are not much occupied with this, though they may have recognized Him as such. They wanted compassionate grace and they had found it. They recognized the justice of God in condemning them and calling them to repentance. They acknowledged His sovereign goodness in having to do with and in receiving worthless sinners. They justified God. One who was self-righteous thought John and divine grace alike out of place. Repentance was all well for others; they were the heirs of the kingdom. Now this is characteristic of Luke. The promised One was there no doubt. But it was in grace to men, grace bringing home to them their moral state. They were meeting God. His way, such as He was in truth, John prepared; Him, in His own person and ways, Christ fully revealed; God manifest in flesh meeting sorrow, meeting

Satan's power, meeting death, meeting sin, in grace. They who felt all these found God in perfect grace there; the friend, indeed, not of the lame, and blind, and deaf merely; but, more wondrous still, of publicans and sinners. They—O how willingly! justified God in His ways; while they did so truly and righteously, in what led them to it, in the mourning testimony of John, who coming in the way of righteousness, went into the desert alone, (for there was none righteous; no, not one,) and calling for good fruit, found only that which sinners could, through grace, come with—the confession that they had borne bad fruit. But this gave understanding. The conscience, recognizing the state he who has it is in, finds in the manifestation of God Himself in grace all it wants, and what infinitely attracts the heart. The knowledge of God is found through conscience, not through the understanding. The convicted sinner is wisdom's child: he knows *himself*—the hardest of all knowledge to acquire. And God in

grace meets his state exactly. But such a manifestation of God does not meet the Pharisee. Right and wrong he knows, and can judge of God's dealing in grace; but not the smallest ray of it enters his soul. Yet God can only be so revealed to man who is a sinner, if it be not in eternal judgment: and even so *He* is not known, for He is love; that is, he does not know God at all. Intellect never knows grace; self-righteousness does not want it. We learn to know God through conscience, when grace has awakened to feel its need. Here the child of wisdom is found. The history of the poor woman and the Pharisee is the example of this. The poor sinner was the child of wisdom. She judged her sins with God: she had found Him in grace for her sins. She did not know forgiveness, but she had tasted love. It had won her confidence, the true divinely-given confidence of an humbled heart. This was Christ's work in the world. At the beginning Satan had gained man to evil and lust by first producing distrust of God. Why had God kept back

this one tree? Man would be like Him if he had. Confidence in God was gone; then lust came in. The blessed Redeemer, while coming indeed to put away sin, yet in His life as the manifestation of God, had come winning back the confidence of man's heart by perfect love—grace in the midst of sin; humbled to the lowest to bring it wherever there was a want: to win man by his wants, and sorrows, and even his sins, where by grace the true sense of them was, back to God; that he might trust in God, because He was God, in love, when he could trust in none else, and thus know Him as God in the fullest revelation of Him—a child of wisdom, true in heart, and knowing God. Such was this poor sinner; justly feeling her sins, but feeling that being such, and feeling herself such, there was One she could trust. Had He been less than God, she could not—had no right to do so—no profit in doing it. It would not meet her case. What God was had reached her heart. She could not have explained it. But it had met her case.

How lovely is this, and yet how humbling to man ! In the Pharisee we have clear intellect—the perception of right and wrong, as far as natural conscience goes. All that was in Christ, all that was in God manifested in grace, he had had no perception of, saw no beauty in it. His eye was blind as to God. ‘He was no prophet, to say nothing of the promised One.’ This the Lord showed He was, by exposing his heart, and noting to him what state he was in; then leaves him, and the cavillers he was surrounded by.

His heart was with the sinner, the humbled one. Her sins, He had declared to all, were forgiven; but to her He turns, to unfold all God’s grace, to give rest to a weary heart—“*Thy* sins are forgiven thee.” No concealing, no marring integrity by softening matters with her; though owning all that grace had wrought, (she loved much) standing by her, with the heartless. When He notices her sins, she would not have had it otherwise. We never would when grace really works. “*Thy* sins”—but notices it as God, which He could, and

could righteously, through His coming work—"Thy sins are forgiven thee." Man's cavils do not interrupt His work of grace: "Go in peace; thy faith hath saved thee." What words from a divine Redeemer! Sins forgiven, faith in divine love owned, and salvation declared to be possessed by it: peace—perfect, divinely-given peace, for her! She had not trusted the heart of God in vain. He had revealed Himself that she might trust it. Grace was greater than sin, though it allowed none of it. It wrought conviction, confession, confidence; but it gave forgiveness, salvation, peace: for God, who had restored the soul, and more, by the revelation of Himself, was there. It seems to me, besides this profoundly interesting individual case, instructive to see how, while manifested clearly as the promised One, the Saviour in this Gospel passes on, by the way in which He is manifested, into His divine manifestation in grace. It is not followed here as in Matthew, which speaks of dealings with Israel, with woes to Chorazin and Bethsaida,

though even there it issues in grace; but in the manifestation of God in grace, and the picture of a poor sinner become the child of wisdom, as taught her soul's need, and the grace of God to meet it. Observe here, too, how love is known, and brokenness of heart trusts it before the answer of peace is given by Him who could do so.

Our chapter gives us thus the God of the Gentiles; the God who delivers from death, raises from it; the God who meets the sinner in grace, when all sin is known, and sends him away in peace from Himself. It is well to have to do with such a God!

A SERIES.

No. 5.

THE RULE OF LIFE AND THE USE OF THE LAW.*

The condition of man is, as we have seen, one of enmity against God, not retaining God in his knowledge, and his

* There are several inaccuracies of expression in the Paper on the "Old and New Nature," (No. 4 of this series,) which the writer of it desires

foolish heart darkened, therefore he must of necessity be dependent on revelation for revival or certainty of any knowledge of that God who was, to all intents and purposes, lost to him.

If by a rule of life be meant man's course in relation to God, (and what else can it mean?) it is plain that revelation, according to its terms and scope, is in all *ages and dispensations the only rule of life proper to man or appointed by God*, since his fall and alienation from all that was good and true. If man did not retain God in his knowledge, where could he obtain any just or adequate conceptions, in order to return to Him, but from revelation? Study the mind of man in its own activities, and see how it searches on all sides to extend its infor-

may be corrected in accordance with the following note.—ED.

I beg to omit the word "unfallen" in page 12, line 1, as unnecessary and tending to give a wrong idea. I also desire to substitute "nature" for "humanity" in page 27, line 16, as a more fit expression for what is intended to be conveyed, viz., the "divine nature," of which we are made partakers, and which is the nature of Christ.

mation of all that is pleasant to it, eagerly ranging over it as the eye travels over beautiful scenery, proving that it has not obtained what it wants to know, and its very curiosity betraying its ignorance, as well as the fear of the consequences of its ignorance. In fact, nothing but a divine revelation could relieve this lurking insatiable necessity. What was Adam to do after he fell, if he had no divine revelation? Where was he until it came? Dressed with fig leaves; and his conscience so alarmed by the voice of God and the consciousness that he was naked, that his acquired information only leads him to hide himself among the trees of the garden. What could have been his rule of life without revelation? That which he *had*, he had broken and despised; and now he was undergoing the penalty of his transgression, and notwithstanding all his human information, he was without clue or guidance how to extricate himself or order himself under a new rule. Revelation alone supplied this to him. By it he learned what his course on earth

should be. By it he learned what was to be his deliverance, and how it should be effected; and by God was he clothed and prepared to enter on his new and changed circumstances. It is easy to say or think that man's own sense would have discovered what alone seems sensible; for wisdom, *when once declared*, is always palpable; and people wonder they had not seen what appears so self-evident. But in Adam we have an instance of the action of human intelligence, having fallen from *one* rule of life, before it received *another* through revelation; and how that revelation supplied it with distinct lines of knowledge and hope, of which it knew nothing before. Moreover, that in adhering to the light and rule which these lines presented to him, he was observing the *only* rule of life either offered or known to him. It was vain for him to attempt to return to that which in unbelief he had abrogated, and to which, according to the terms of the penalty of disobedience, all return was impossible. He presents to us the spectacle of a

great man degraded without any ability to repair his ruined fortunes, though having sense and intelligence to know that his circumstances were disastrous and humiliating. In this helpless condition, a revelation from God is vouchsafed to him, and its light and counsel is to afford him a true and distinct rule of life; that is to say, if he be subject to and influenced by it, he would tread the path by which he should be extricated from all the misery and darkness in which he found himself; but if he did not, he must only return to the confusion of an enlarged intelligence, which rendered him all the more bitterly sensitive to a position which could neither counsel nor extricate him from judgment, nor restore him to happy relations with his Creator. God's purpose, and his mind towards man, and therefore man's relation to Him was the true rule of life. To depart from that one jot or tittle was to lose it. Adam accepted it, for he believed it, and called his wife's name Eve, as the mother of all living, though judicially, and apart from revelation, she

was the mother of all the dying. In Cain, Adam's firstborn, we see how the rule of life is abandoned the moment the light and doctrine of the revelation is overlooked or disregarded. Cain slipped away from it sadly by recognizing no judgment on man or on the earth; and the consequence was that, however good his intentions, he was not accepted; and his murder of Abel only established the fatality of having left that rule of life, by the observance of which Abel finds full acceptance with God, who counted him "righteous;" beyond which no rule of life could lead or place him.

Let it be admitted that God's revelation of His mind was always the truth which indicated man's course and relation before him; and we have it without controversy, that the knowledge of that revelation, and subjection to its claims, was the true rule of life in every age, and specially given for and suited to that particular age or dispensation. Not that any previous revelation was set aside or disregarded, for all that God

reveals must be truth; and subsequent revelations do not contradict previous ones, but confirm them, though the adaptability of each is according to the special need in which it found man for whom it was given. And the fuller it is, the more distinct is the claim it asserts over the believer to walk according to it. When man reverts to a prior revelation, however good in itself, he has lost the rule of life suitable and necessary for him in the day and hour in which he needs it; simply, because God has since given him a fuller one, and the fuller light is suited to the greater need; and is not only the better revelation, but the only one competent to overcome increasing evil, or with which faith would simply engage the soul. If I am not in the light of the revelation given to me of God, I cannot be in the rule of life incumbent on me according to the terms of the revelation. If Noah had confined his rule of life to that of Abel, he would have been lost in the flood. If Abraham had reverted to that of Noah, he never would have

left Ur of the Chaldees. And if a Christian revert to the law, Christ is for him "dead in vain."

Let us trace a little more fully how the revelation unfolded the rule of life. Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, all acted in accordance with the revelation given to each, and became heirs of the righteousness which is by faith. More they could not have desired. Their rule of life was satisfactory for them, and their righteousness was of *faith* and not of *law*. But in process of time the law was given, and this was a different revelation to any which God had previously made to man. It did not unfold His grace and purpose towards man as previous revelations had, (I now speak simply of the law itself,) but it declared God's claim on man, on His chosen people, who professed themselves able and willing to respond to it.

Now the law, though verily a revelation from God, and given for a special purpose, which we shall notice presently, did not of itself comprise the rule of life even for those to whom it was given.

It could not, for it was only a revelation of God's claim on man, and not of His heart towards man; and however ignorantly and recklessly man might accept that claim, God's grace was too great to leave him solely under it for a rule of life. Nor would it have been possible, for there were sins to be remitted which were not a direct infraction of law. The gracious God then at the same time ordained a course of sacrifices through a priesthood, which, while the law spoke of His claim, proclaimed, though darkly, the grace of His heart in providing a ransom for sins outside law. The sacrifices were as much a rule of life for Israel as the law was; and were necessary even when the law made no judicial claim. The *one* was God's demand on man; the *other*, in type, His grace to man; proclaiming that "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

For what purpose then was the law given? Was it to reveal God? Was it a transcript of what God is in Himself or in His relation to man? Not at all: it was God's righteous claim on man;

and given to convict of sin; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." So that it could be no rule of life with reference to what God is. And this, i. e., what God is, had been the rule of life for the saints of God in all previous revelations: the claim on them was to respond by faith to the declaration which God had made of HIMSELF, and by yielding this response, they became heirs of righteousness. But no faith could respond to *law*. When that was given, a new claim was preferred against man; viz., as to what God required of him; a claim which he must either satisfy or sink into the place of utter helplessness and condemnation. It was an exaction from him, straining his strength to the utmost, and never in any degree offering him any succour; so that the law (instead of revealing God and affecting man in the light and knowledge of that revelation as heretofore) could do nought but reveal *man* in all his rebellion and corruption, that "by the commandment sin should become exceeding sinful." If I educate my son and furnish him with

stores of intelligence, and then point out the path and the rule I wish him to adhere to, he ought to be able to accomplish my wishes, because the very difficulties of the path would only disclose to him the value of the information with which I had stored him. But if I took an uneducated slave and required him to master languages and execute works of which he had neither knowledge nor ability for, though I might be quite justified in doing so, it is plain he must sink under my imposition. Now this is what the law did. It addressed man *as he was*; furnished him with no light nor increased moral power, but simply exacted *from* him, and thereby tested his ability. Demands on me that are greater than my resources necessarily test my power and inconceivably press on me; but they are not a rule of life for me practically, unless I can satisfy them. And even then only in part, for I should only be what God demands of me, and not what His own nature requires, if I would walk with Him. Hence, Enoch and Noah, though they knew not, and there-

fore did not, keep the law,* walked with God in all intimacy, which Saul of Tarsus, who was "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless," never could.

What then is the real rule of life for any quickened soul? The same I reply *in principle* as it was for saints in all dispensations; for Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham. Even that which leads it in company and fellowship with the mind of God, *according as that mind is revealed*. To us, unlike the saints of old, it is *wholly* revealed, and that in the Lord Jesus Christ, who declared the Father, expounding fully what God was, and what a true man (for such He was Himself) should be towards Him. Therefore, to "put on Christ," and nothing less is for me the full and true rule of life; and for this end I have His life, which places me in communion with the Father and the Son. He is the sum of all promises, the substance of all shadows, the end of all law, the ex-

* That is, in its formal requirements and as law.—ED.

pression and impersonation of all that suited God, the Man who pleased God. The law exacted an observance of a *part* of the will of God, but Christ, giving full expression to that will, went far beyond the law, inasmuch as the whole of anything must include all its parts, and left us an example to follow His steps, having, at the same time, placed us by His death as much beyond judgment as He is; for "as he is, so are we in this world." So to make the law our rule of life is wholly derogatory to our high standing. It is all the difference between being merely what God claimed of man, and being suited to Him in the closest relationship. The law is for the slave: the spirit, life, intelligence, manners, and ways of the Son are for the sons; for though "the righteous claim of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit," it is infinitely exceeded by us, as in fellowship with the Father and the Son. And to make anything short of the Son, my rule of life, is to ignore my union with Him, and the full revelation which

God has now given of Himself in Him, as well as the life and spirit which He has given to every believer to walk in conformity to His mind and ways.

I have said that subsequent and fuller revelations do not invalidate prior ones; and it is plain that, by making the believer's rule of life of so much higher an order and aim, we do not make void the law. On the contrary, it holds a place, though a distant one, as to what God demands of man as man, though not as in the near place of sonship. Nor should I hesitate to make use of the law if I wanted to convict a man of anything contrary to sound doctrine. But if I wanted to urge one to his high estate, I should point out the way and manner of Christ to him. To convict a wilful one of excess, and to exhort a willing one to progress, are two very different things. If a man is so wilful, that to say to him, "You are not like Christ," would, though true, be inapplicable, it only shows how far below the light of God's revelation he has fallen. The law, by which of old "sin

became exceeding sinful," I might use to show how God's lowest claim on man had been transgressed by him, and thus silence him. He must, in the light of it, either repent or be condemned; for it would give him no succour. It is negative; and a man must be persisting in the flesh, when I should use it against him, merely to convict and condemn. But when I want to stimulate a true disciple, be he never so failing, I point out to him the spirit in which Christ walked; and the spirit of Christ in him responds to the exhortation. I want to invigorate such an one, not to condemn him; and I therefore seek to engage his soul with, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and to whose image he is to be conformed.

To "put on Christ," I have already said, is now the rule of life, because we have His life, and He is the new man; and it is to Him as the new, risen, and heavenly man that we are being conformed. The soul of the believer has no neutral ground. It is to "put off the old and put on the new man, which

after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And what could it have more? There are two states in which this rule of life acts. The apostle says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Now this passage shows that the practical life and position of a Christian is connected with the two states passed through by our Lord—the one in resurrection, and the other in death and suffering here. The rule of life must embrace the two; and if I fail in fellowship with either, I must be defective in my rule of life. *First*, I must know Him in the power of His resurrection, otherwise I am in death or its consequences. But in knowing Him *thus*, a new object of interest, and a wondrous power even—a power out of death—is known to me. It is knowing Christ, *where He is*, and the power which placed Him there. The man who has this rule of life must be pre-eminently distinguished from the natural man, who does not know God, and who is in

bondage and weakness because of death. But this is only one state which the rule of life embraces. The other is knowing Christ as He was down here—not as a Jew, or walking in Jewish circumstances; though, of course, He was such, and did so walk: but as the suffering man, and thus knowing the fellowship of His sufferings, “conformity to his death.” The rule of life for me embraces all with regard to which He could say that He has left us an example to follow His steps. His path was one of suffering unto death; and though, of course, He entered into both in a way and degree that we never could, still, in following His steps, we take the place of suffering and death here, and that because we know Him in the power of His resurrection as above it all. Because in spirit we are with Him in heaven, where our citizenship is. Now if the rule of life embraces these two lines for me, I am, like the apostle, “found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by

faith." It is a righteousness quite apart from, and above, law; as we read, "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested"—a righteousness that, so far from being measured by any commandment or sum of commandments given by God to man, has no lower measure than Christ Himself. His life in me, His resurrection-life, reaches up to where He is, knowing the power that placed Him there; and, at the same time, puts me into the place of suffering here which He occupied. And so perfect is the rule of life given me, that it will take no lower ground than to be "found in him," in "the righteousness of God."

In conclusion, I repeat, that man's correspondence with the revelation of God in every age was the rule of life. So is it now; and my correspondence must be with the full revelation of God in His Son, who is at once the model for me, and the One from whom a new life flows to me, which enables me to walk in likeness to Himself, and in such acknowledged acceptance before God, that as He is, so am I in this world: beyond judgment, and in the righteousness of God through faith. Revelation helps man to act with reference to God, for it reveals *God*. Law exacts from ruined man in order to reveal *himself*, expose his poverty, and the pride in which he denied

his poverty. Useful, I admit, for the *same end* even now, but not as a standard or model. Such alone now is the life-giving Lord, "God manifest in the flesh," to whose image we are to be conformed. To His own likeness in word and deed He seeks to lead us, until we all come "in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of Him, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The better I know my Lord, and walk in communion with His mind, and in the power of His Spirit, the better do I know the high and blessed sphere which I occupy before God, and what is that great and holy rule of life proper to me. So much so, that I do not judge any of my acts by the law, but by Him (and I hereby "establish the law" and immeasurably exceed it) who as man was the Father's delight, not only obeying Him, but in every possible way well-pleasing to Him, not only paying Him what He required, (for that is law, and that He did also,) but saying, "I delight to do thy will, O my God."

In Him, and through Him, it is that we have a rule of life and therefore are inconceivably above all law. Little, alas! do we walk in it. May we do so more and more, and thus know better the blessing and power accorded to us therein.

THE MINOR PROPHETS.

The question may sometimes have occurred, when reading the Minor Prophets, why are they arranged in the order we have them? Is it accidental, or is it designed? They are not chronologically arranged, excepting the last three, who prophesied after the return of the Jews from Babylon. Were they placed in chronological order, we should have them as follows—Jonah, Joel, Amos, Micah, Hosea, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Why, then, are they arranged differently? Can the subjects of the different prophecies furnish a clue to their position in the sacred volume?

Hosea is the first of the twelve as we have them, according to the arrangement in the Hebrew Bible. Why should his prophecy stand first? In the following pages an answer is attempted to be given.

In this book we have the grounds of God's moral dealings with Israel. They

were His people. He would cast them off because of their sins. "Ammi" should be "Lo Ammi," and "Ruhamah" become "Lo Ruhamah." But was that a final sentence? No. "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God." (Hosea ii. 23.) Such is the statement of the Spirit of God. It is further added, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." (Chap. iii. 4, 5.) How can this be brought about? How will it be accomplished? These two questions are answered in these prophets. Hosea answers the first; the others, Malachi excepted, answer the second.

Having, in the three first chapters of

the prophecy, stated what Israel had been, what it was to be, and what it would again be, in the last days, the Spirit of God in chap. iv.—x. gives a picture of the moral condition of the nation when the prophet wrote, showing the utter corruption of all classes—people, prophets, priests, princes. How, then, could God deal with them again? *He could not on the ground of what they were*; but He could deal with them in grace. Hence, from xi.—xiv. we have that brought out, ending with the confession, which the Lord prepares for them, when they shall see their sin and turn to Him. Hosea is therefore the account of God's moral dealings with them, showing why they are cast off, and on what principle He can yet bring them in. It stands, then, as the first prophet of the twelve, ere the judgments and circumstances connected with their restoration are recounted.

Joel comes next. His subject is the day of the Lord, in special connexion with what will take place in Judah and at Zion. We have the fasting and

mourning of Judah, when judgment comes on them, the Lord's interference with the northern army, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the gathering of all nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment. Zion, we see, is to be the centre of the whole earth: "The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." (iii. 16.) Joel then gives us the sphere in which the great and solemn events of that day will be principally transacted.

Amos succeeds Joel, opening with judgments on all the nations who inhabit any portion of the territory which God promised to Israel—between the Euphrates and river of Egypt. He then goes on to speak of judgments on Israel and Judah, all of which have already taken place. From iii.—viii. we get another account of the moral condition of Israel, which brought on them God's judgments. In ix. we read the final condemnation of the sinful kingdom, (8,) but the restoration of the tabernacle of David, as in the days of old—not the appearance of a new

dynasty under the name of David, but the re-establishment of his house. In close connexion with this we have the statements (1) that they shall possess the remnant of Edom, and (2) that there will then be Gentiles on whom the Lord's name is called. The two following prophets open out these two thoughts; Obadiah giving the destruction of Edom, and the possession of Mount Seir by Israel; and Jonah showing on what principle God can deal with Gentiles as exhibited in his dealings with Nineveh by the hand of his servant. It is not that they are innocent, for all have sinned. It is not that He fulfils His covenant with them, for He never made one with Gentiles. It is not on the ground of law that He deals with them. It can only then be on the ground of grace, sending a message to them, telling them what they are, and the consequences of their sin if persisted in, a message which when received is one of salvation to those who believe it.

Micah follows. Here we get the circumstance of the last days in connexion

with Israel again introduced and fresh subjects stated. If kingly power is to be restored as predicted by Amos to the house of David, the true worship of God is also to be re-established in Jerusalem. "In the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (iv. 1, 2.) Thus the true worship of God will be restored in Jerusalem, and that not for Israel only but for many nations as well. But Micah gives us other prophecies of interest. He tells us who the King is, what treatment He will meet with, and we know how that has come to pass—His birthplace as man, His eternal existence as God, "whose goings forth

have been of old from everlasting." (v. 1, 2.)

The result of the King's authority being asserted is the destruction of the great centre of worldly or political power, the Assyrian of the latter day. (v. 5, 6.) But ere that takes place the remnant will pass through much trouble from the ungodly part of the nation. (vii. 2.) What the Lord foretold (Matt. xxiv.) will then come to pass. (5, 6.) What the remnant have to do is therefore stated. "I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation." (7.) The ungodly may rejoice at their trials. They acknowledge they are of the Lord, but they look for deliverance; for "who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy

to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." (18—20.)

These two latter subjects, the destruction of the Assyrian and the position of the remnant, form the burden of the two next prophets, Nahum and Habakkuk, in the latter of whom we see the ungodly in the midst of evil, waiting for the fulfilment of the vision, for it will come, and rejoicing in God, even if all outward prosperity has vanished.

Zephaniah follows. His subject is the day of the Lord. (i. 14—18.) We have then the judgment of the Philistines, Moab and Ammon, and the occupation of their territories by the children of Israel. Ethiopia also and the land of Nimrod are included in the nations judged. But not merely have we judgment spoken of, but the nations of the world forsaking idols and worshipping the Lord. "He will famish all the gods of the earth, and *men* shall worship him every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." (ii. 11.) Micah predicted many nations coming

to Jerusalem, to learn the ways and laws of the God of Israel. Here we have a wider scene, the acknowledgment of the Lord by all nations as the only true God, and their legitimate object of worship. "I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." (iii. 9.)

We come next to the three prophets who prophesied to the returned remnant after their restoration, placed in chronological order. Yet there seems in them also a moral order which befits their position. Micah and Zephaniah have predicted the restoration of worship at Jerusalem, and all nations serving the Lord with one consent. Haggai follows with a prediction respecting the glory of the house in the last days, which shall exceed all former glory. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house

with glory, saith the Lord. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (ii. 6—9.)

After this we have Zechariah, in whose writings the two lines of prophecy respecting the king, and the restoration of worship converge. We have had the predictions about the restoration of kingly power, and the person in whom they will be accomplished, and the re-establishment of worship at Jerusalem. But a temple implies a priest. Zechariah tells us that the priest and king are one and the same. "He shall be a priest on his throne." (vi. 13.) Nor this only, but the object of worship, which we have had before stated as the Lord of hosts, is now found to be Him who is King. "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all nations which come against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts." (xiv. 16.) Nor this only;

but now that the millennium, so long promised, has commenced, and all authority opposed to the King, the Son of man, the Lord of the earth, outwardly, at least, has ceased; and the harvest and vintage of the earth having taken place, the time is come for the feast of tabernacles, and these nations shall keep it at Jerusalem. If any refuse they shall be punished. Here the prophecy stops. Beyond this point, the establishment of the millennium, the Spirit of God in the Old Testament does not go, except, perhaps, in Isaiah l xv., lxvi., where the new heavens and the new earth are spoken of as to be created. If we seek for further information about the events on the earth, we must go to 2 Peter and Revelation. Here, therefore, the Old Testament revelation stops. It has carried us to the commencement of the millennium, but no further.

Malachi now comes, and closes the book of the minor prophets. His prophecy seems characterized more by a warning to the remnant to consider their ways, and remember the Lord is

coming suddenly to His temple, (iii. 1,) and there will be a day of judgment and discrimination between the righteous and the wicked, (iii. 18, and iv. 1,) for which they should be prepared; but before it comes, the prophet Elijah should be sent. He does not go beyond Zechariah in his prophecy, but rather appeals to the people to be ready when all these things should come to pass, thus forming a fitting conclusion to these prophets, as Hosea is a commencement.

Shortly to sum up the outline given above:

Hosea gives the ground of God's dealings with Israel when they had forfeited everything. Joel, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, unfold each some new subject with reference to the day of the Lord and the establishment of His kingdom on the earth. Obadiah and Jonah may be viewed for this purpose somewhat in the light of appendices to Amos—Nahum and Habakkuk as holding a similar position to Micah; whilst Malachi is God's appeal to the people to be ready for His coming.

It has not been attempted to give even a short syllabus of what each prophet dwells on, but only those events which, peculiar to each, show a gradual unfolding of revelation — marking a reason for the position of each writer in the order we have them. How wonderful are the arrangements of the Lord! How marvellous, too, that goodness which has revealed for His people's sake what He will yet do, furnishing them with words suited to their need, (Hosea xiv.,) and describing their position, and what their conduct should be (Habakkuk) in their trying circumstances. As we read of the events of the latter days, we cannot but remember that we are reading of what will take place after we leave this world, events of peculiar interest and importance to Israel and the Gentiles. Yet are they not of interest to us? We shall not be *in* the great tribulation; we shall not be able to sing "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." But do not these events as now unfolded interest us? Who is to be the leader in it all? For what pur-

pose are these things to take place? He whom we know as Lord is the leader, and it is for His glory all these events will come to pass. We see in these prophecies Zion as the centre towards which all eyes shall be turned; but it is Zion when the Lord is there; and we see Him as the object of the world's adoration, the King of the whole earth, whom we now know by grace, and praise on the ground of accomplished redemption, and with whom we shall be when these events come to pass, reigning with Him over the earth. It is our Lord that is here exalted, our Saviour that is to be worshipped, our God that is the subject of praise. He who has linked us with Himself in a marvellous manner, as our life and head. What, then, concerns Him should not be an object of indifference to us. May all that is connected with His future glory and manifestation as Lord of the whole earth, awaken in our hearts, as we read of it, joy and praise.

A SERIES.

No. 6.

WORSHIP; OR, OUR PLACE BEFORE GOD.

We have seen that being children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we have been given the Spirit of the Son; that we are in Him a new creation, partakers of the divine nature, and that He is the rule and model of our life, because "the life we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us."

Seeing all these wondrous blessings which flow to us from the grace which has called us into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, let us now dwell a little on our place before God, and the nature and character of our worship. Worship is the expression of a creature in any degree sensible of what his Creator is, and of how much he owes to Him. It is the sense the soul has for and towards one to whom it is inconceivably indebted, and to whom it is acceptable; that is to say, one to

whom it can offer its expressions of satisfaction and acknowledgment. The heart filled with the sense of what has been revealed to it of that one, gives expression to its returning homage and gratitude; this is worship. And when we are in fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal life given to us through the Son of God, we are worshipping, and our joy is full.

This order of worship is proper to our relationship to the Father and Son, and to the place of nearness into which we are brought. It was not always thus. The idea of worship, it is true, was maintained in the Mosaic economy by rites and forms, which now are often not surpassed even by believers; but such was not worshipping in spirit and in truth; and, as the Lord explains to the woman of Samaria, the time was then come when "the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Forms and distance were at an end. Souls were now to worship the Father in spirit and in

truth; sensibly and in full liberty to express to Him their sense of what He is to them, and in His own intrinsic value and perfection. Now this is not simply prayer, nor is it any other Christian virtue or service. It is the action of one brought nigh to God, and who knows Him as Father, but one to which the feeblest has title and can appropriate; for it is written, "I write unto you babes because ye have known the Father." I may know much truth, and many of my privileges as a Christian, and yet be in an unworshipping state. Why? Because I cannot worship God unless my soul is in the light and unembarrassed by anything which could disturb it. It is not only that I believe in the blood of Christ, but it is the consciousness of being happily before God, knowing Him as my Father; therefore I do not see how one who doubts his acceptance or his sonship, or who has an unpurged conscience, can worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for it is only in proportion as the soul realizes and enjoys the place which Christ has

secured for it before God, that it can worship. "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." If I am in the light, I not only have fellowship, but I am at ease in my conscience touching everything which could disturb it, because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me from all sin.

Now, light has a twofold action; one is sensibly to relieve me from what is opposed to it—from darkness; the other to occupy me with what it can show me. The first of these actions of light must, as is evident, be known to the soul before the second can be entered on. I must, of course, be relieved from what is opposed to light, before I can be occupied with what light can disclose to me; and, therefore, I am not in the intelligence of worship until I am in the position where that intelligence can reach me. I must be relieved of every sense of barrier between me and the Father before I can worship the Father in spirit and in truth; and here it is that even pious, earnest souls fail to

reach the climax of blessing. They are occupied in seeking relief from the clouds which intercept their knowledge of the Father rather than in worshipping Him in the full consciousness, that being relieved of everything which could debar them from Him, they are in the Eternal Life, and in fellowship with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ. I believe souls often mistake the first action of light for the second; but it is plain I am not worshipping the Father until I am in the second. The clouds, the opposers of light, must be completely dispersed ere my soul can undistractedly be occupied with the blessed object which it is the highest province of light to show me, so as to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Let us look at this subject a little in St. John's Gospel. In John iii.—vii. we have the subject of *life* treated of. Eternal life as God's gift, now brought to us by the Son, is in these chapters set forth; but in chapters viii. and ix. the subject is *light*; and this same Blessed One, by whom the life flows, is also the

“light of the world.” Now in these two chapters, which must be read together and properly learned together, the Lord shows the two actions of light; first, in relieving the soul of everything from man which was legally against it; and secondly, in engaging it with light itself—with *Himself*. For He was “the light.” The woman taken in sin in chapter viii. and the blind man in chapter ix. are both illustrative of this in different ways. The former is an example of my practical condition among men, as an exposed and legally-condemned sinner; the latter typifies what I am by nature before God; i. e., without sight—utterly blind. Christ as the light of the world deals with both. He does not condemn the one, and He gives sight to the other. The guilty soul under condemnation of the broken law is relieved of the burden of felt condemnation in the presence of Him who is the light, and this is the first part of the action of the grace of Christ known to a soul in relation to God. The mere fact of having life does not ensure this;

it is only in the presence of Christ that the sense of condemnation is removed. The thief on the cross knew it fully. Peter knew it when in the sinking ship the Lord said unto him, "Fear not." It is the soul brought into clear, distinct acquaintance with the work of Christ for it, which His own word to it ratifies. He has borne the judgment of the guilty one, however wretched and self-condemned, in the agony of judicial death; and in the sense of this the soul can now say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and hence, there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Light exposes myself; but it is also to me *the light of life*, and shows me how condemnation has been removed from me through our Lord Jesus Christ; and if I have not the sense of freedom from condemnation, however anxious I may be to obtain it, and even though having life, I am not worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth. Wrapt up I may be, as many earnest souls are, in longing desires after this blessing and seeking

to understand my true position before God; but though all this is very devotional, it is not worship. We have the same distinction as to *life* in chapters iii., iv. In chapter iii. eternal life is acquired on believing, as the serpent-bitten Israelite when he looked at the brazen serpent, lived. But in chapter iv. there is the felt possession of life. It is in him a "well of water, springing up into everlasting life." The soul realizes the sphere and range of eternal life; and consequently the Lord here introduces the subject of *worship*; for the result of such conscious possession must be worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. In chapters viii., ix. the Lord is leading the soul consciously unto the apprehension of His grace, as we have seen. Eternal life, God's gift, had been set forth in the previous chapters. Light, which expresses the state and region in which I come to realize that gift is here treated of; and hence the Lord is the light of the world. These two chapters comprise the history of man's acceptance and

rejection of the gift; the woman and the blind man on the one hand, and the Pharisees on the other. The condemned soul experiences the first action of light in the Lord's own presence, learning thereby from Him that there is no condemnation; not as the Pharisees who, while upholding righteousness, must needs quit that presence for fear of being convicted of sin; but remaining before Him, conscious of having no other refuge. She learns in principle that He can be just and yet the justifier of Him who believeth in Jesus. And before she had known this, before she had experienced this first action of light, could she have worshipped? Surely not: yet do we not see many who would not admit that they are under no condemnation, assume to worship. I would ask such, (not to distress or embarrass them, but to induce them to see the true place of the believer before God,) *what* they worship? We ought to desire to worship; for the Father seeketh such as worship in spirit and in truth to worship Him; but if I am oc-

cupied with myself and my own state, how can I assume that which is occupation, nay engrossment with God? Hence light first relieves me of what presses on my conscience, having shown me too its real nature and evil; for there is no concealment in light; all is manifested; but I am sensibly relieved of the burden by Him who bore it, and who, while He shows it to me, at the same moment relieves me from it. But until thus *wholly* relieved I cannot worship. If I would engage my attention with some fine scenery, and a fog intervenes, can I gaze on it until the fog is dispelled? I may feel much in anticipation as I see the fog rise, but until it does rise, I cannot enjoy the scene. The sun not only dispels the fog, but enables me to behold the scene. But it must dispel the fog *first*. Now this is in figure what Christ does for us; but this is not all. Chapter ix. teaches us more of His gracious ways with us as the light of the world—the light of our souls.

The first action of light is twofold. We have seen one part of it as exemplified

in the condemned woman: the other part we shall find in the sightless man. Both these conditions are combined in the one needing Christ as the light. Not only must I be relieved of my burden, but I must be given light; and this, too, He furnishes me with. It is His power acting in me, and rendering me sensible of being in a new state. But I am not necessarily *all at once* occupied with what should be the real object of my newly-given sight. This man whose eyes were opened was not, although he "came seeing." Light had not effected its second action on him yet, or introduced him into the region of worship. So with many souls. Sight often occupies them at first with what they *must do*; as in the other case we have seen the soul was oppressed with the evil which it *had done*: and these two occupations are often found in the same person. One time occupied about his sin, unrelieved from the sense of condemnation; and at another making use of his newly-acquired sight to contend with Scribes and Pharisees, as did this

man. That is to say, occupied with questions, entangled with the formularies and ordinances of the law, hampered by systematic religion—for all systematic religion is borrowed from the Jewish legal economy, without which there could be no pretence even to a divine sanction. Now this man could not be said to be worshipping while he was thus hampered and struggling under convictions as to the light itself. Conscious of the possession of sight, and the light no doubt gaining ground in his soul, and confirming him in its sure origin; still, as long as these questionings occupy him, and these forms hamper him, he is not a worshipping soul. But he is now to become one. Light is to complete its office with him. Cast out of the synagogue of carnal worship, outside all these questionings, the Lord of light draws near, and reveals Himself to him; and the immediate and inevitable consequence is, that he worships. And how? His soul, filled with the presence of the Blessed One from whom all his blessing came, and who had declared the

Father, then and there he had fellowship with the Father and the Son, and his joy was full. Christ the light had not only dispelled the darkness, had not only given him sight, but had disclosed to him what was to be the absorbing object and occupation of his vision; and now, "in the light as he is in the light," he knew both fellowship and worship.

Such is the true and happy result of the wonderful action on the soul illustrated in these two chapters. (John viii. ix.) The clouds are all gone—the cloud of condemnation and of legalism; the question either as to what wrong I have done, or what right I must do. The light having cleared them all away, I am consciously occupied with and rejoicing in Him, who has effected so great a blessing for me; and this is my true place as a Christian, and where alone I can worship intelligently. I should not say that gleams of full light do not at times cheer souls who are still undelivered from the sense of condemnation, or who are more occupied with the acquisition of sight than with Christ

from whom it comes; but, then, they have no intelligence in those gleams, or no abiding peace and joy in their souls; and the fact of their having those momentary flashes only proves what I maintain, viz., that they are entitled to a distinct intelligence respecting their right to so much more through grace, in the steady and unchangeable light of Him who by Himself and in Himself enables the babe to know the Father, and thus constitutes it a worshipper. True worshippers are few, because souls continually mistake the devotional feeling or occupation about one's own spiritual state in some form or other for worship, as if such occupation were one and the same thing as occupation with God! When the prodigal was first brought into the Father's house, he saw how unfit he was personally for such a place, and he thought more of himself than of it or of the great owner of it. But when he gets completely at ease there, he forgets himself, and makes merry with his father. We form a very poor conception of our place with God,

(for we are brought nigh unto him,) if we do not see that our worship must be in spirit and in truth; that is to say, we must be sensibly before Him in fellowship, without anything to hinder or intercept our engagement with Him. Many of us, I fear, are like the worshippers under the law: the best of them did everything for the sacrifice, but never could follow the priest into the holy place, much less into the holiest of all. We are occupied only with the sacrifice offered by Christ, but have not acknowledged its effects for us to God's glory. We have not felt and understood that we really and truly have passed through the rent veil (His broken body) into the holiest of all. Have our souls the sense of this? No lower sense belongs to the worshipping soul. There is no question of sin, or no question of what grace is in contrast to law; but all questions being answered, the soul is enraptured with the wondrous acceptance into which it is introduced, and true praise then flows out to God, and God is honoured by such as we are. The Queen

of Sheba exemplified this. Hard questions at first engaged her, but king Solomon solved all these, and relieved her of all personal anxieties, and she could then look around and fill her soul with the variety and magnificence of all his glory; and so filled was it, that there was no more spirit left in her, but to praise and extol him, and to give him the return of her heart for all she had found him to be. (1 Kings x. 1—10.)

Mary walking with our Lord to the tomb of Lazarus was not properly worshipping, for sorrow filled her heart; but when she broke the alabaster box and poured it on His head while He sat at meat, and filled the house with the odour of the ointment, she was worshipping, for He Himself alone occupied her soul; and all her expressions were with reference to Him, and in consonance with His mind, which is the sure fruit of worship.

I may add, that I believe the cause of all our ignorance of the Lord's mind is, not that we do not wish to know His mind, but that we are not in our true

place—worshipping, and therefore cannot receive it or understand it. This state, normal for a Christian, and one professed to be attained to by every Christian, is the one most imperfectly known, and to the ignorance of which can be ascribed all our failure in doctrine and practice, as well as in peace and happiness. How could a man continue wilful in doctrine or practice if he were worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth? The wilful is not worshipping, however devotional. The unhappy or doubting one is not worshipping, however devoted. It was as a worshipper that Joshua must enter Canaan. (See Joshua v. 14, 15.) He had already been introduced into a circle of blessing at Gilgal, but the presence of the Lord commanding worship was the filling up of that circle. It is as a worshipper only that I can learn His mind. Nay, we may say from scripture history, that no soul ever learned the Lord's mind at the moment, but in worship; and therefore we see in the Revelation the natural happy expression of the soul fully con-

scious of its place and portion, and of the mind of the Mighty and Blessed One who accords it.

The Lord grant unto us better to know our place before Him in His grace to us; for when we do know it, and are sensibly in it, we must worship Him who has shed such mercy and favour on us.

FRAGMENT.

Look at Christ's humiliation and at Paul's. In all his tribulation he could always say, Christ went lower down than this; and he could always commit himself to God, as to a faithful Creator. There were other things in which Christ's sympathy was expressed in a different way. Christ never sinned—never had a fretful will, &c.; but He tasted all the bitterness of that in taking it upon the cross. I must realize the cross to understand His sympathy in this. It was when He passed through death for it; and now He can say, "I am he which was dead, and am alive."

JOSHUA I.

In the Book of Joshua we read the history of the taking possession of the land of Canaan, so far as that was carried out; as in the Book of Numbers we follow the same people in their toilsome journey through the wilderness: a journey more toilsome through their own unbelief, but in which a faithful and compassionate God accompanied them all the way, and led them, though by a path of chastening, when they would not go up at once, by the path of faith. Their clothes waxed not old, nor did their feet swell, those forty years.

Both these parts of their history, remark, were after their redemption out of Egypt.

I would trace just now the principles on which the path and service of faith, as represented by the history of Joshua, can be securely and successfully trod.

Let my reader remark—what perhaps he has never noticed—that the conflicts which are recorded in the Book of Joshua are not only after redemption

out of Egypt, but after crossing the Jordan. Now Jordan is generally taken for a figure of *death*, and Canaan of *heaven*; and I do not doubt justly. But how comes it that all is fighting after it, and that the man who appears to Joshua comes as captain of the Lord's host? *War* characterizes Israel's state after entering into Canaan; their *journey*, but through the wilderness. This remarkable feature in the history of those events, which "happened unto them for ensamples, [types,] and are written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world are come," calls us to enquire what the *connexion* of these events is, and how the passage through death and entrance into heaven leads to a state of conflict and war.

The New Testament makes very plain what is the solution of this apparent difficulty. It teaches not only that Christ is dead and risen again for us, but that we have, in God's sight as united to Him by the Spirit, died and risen with Him. "Ye are dead, [or have died,] and your life is hid with

Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) "He hath quickened us together with him, and raised us up together." (Eph. ii.) Thus the Christian himself is viewed as having himself passed through death and being risen again, because Christ who is his life has. "If ye be dead with Christ," says Paul. (Col. ii.) "If ye then be risen with Christ." (Col. iii.) In this sense we are viewed as having passed through Jordan. We have died, and are risen, and are entered into the heavenly places. Hence we have our conflicts there; for the Canaanite and the Perrizzite are yet in the land. So Paul—"We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, with powers, with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." He is here referring to Joshua and Israel, who had to contend with flesh and blood—we with spiritual enemies. Thus the Christian is looked at as having died and risen in Christ, and called upon to possess the land—to realize the blessings given by the power of the Holy Ghost, whether apprehending and enjoying the unsearchable riches

of Christ, or rescuing from the power of Satan those who are led captive by him.

Before I turn to the practical principles I have referred to, let me draw my reader's attention to the effect of having thus passed the Jordan.

First, there is, and thus only, the death of the flesh, entire death to the world. Israel was not *circumcised* in the wilderness: Israel *was* now circumcised, and the reproach of Egypt rolled away. To this, as the place of self-judgment, Israel returned after all their victories. But there was another point: they ate of the old corn of the land, and the manna ceased. The manna is Christ as come down and humbled—Christ for the need of the wilderness. The old corn belongs to the heavenly land—Christ in His heavenly glory. This is all ours before any combat—before a wall has fallen or an enemy is conquered. We possess all the heavenly blessing by a divine title. Then, “the man with the drawn sword”—Christ in spirit—comes to lead us to conflict, but to victory if we walk under His leading.

This leads us to the principles on which victory is to be obtained in the conflict in which we are engaged. All is promised from the river Euphrates to the great sea. But then comes the question of taking possession. We must actively take possession of it to enjoy it. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." Nothing can be simpler. You have only to take possession. But that you must do. So with us. Large possessions are before us. All the unsearchable riches of Christ are ours. But there must be the diligent occupation of the heart with these things in order to possess them. Let the reader be assured that there is a large and rich field before him, all that God has given him in Christ, to delight in; and he has received the divine nature (for I speak of saints) to delight in these things.

But here conflict comes in, because these spiritual enemies would hinder us in realizing, in a pure and undistracted heart, what Jesus calls *our own things*; as the things of this world he calls

another man's. But these conflicts, though useful for exercise and the experience of God's faithfulness, are no hindrance to our taking possession; but, while testing our own state, only show how God is with us. Were the falling of the walls of Jericho and the victories of Joshua a hindrance? No.

Holiness and looking to God, in a word separation of heart to God, are required when the captain of the Lord's host came up to meet Joshua. He was to take his shoes off as much as Moses before God in "the bush." The Lord in our midst, for conflicts, is as holy in nature as the Lord in redemption. Hence, as is known, when there was an Achan in the camp God would not go out with them. But, when there is uprightness of heart, the word is this: "There shall not a man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." What a comfort and strength is this! No difficulty is anything. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" I cannot think of, or meet with, a difficulty which for a moment stops my course. I

have to be careful for *nothing*, and, making my requests known to God, in the midst of conflict, *God's* peace keeps *my* heart. And this never fails. "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Not only God does not forsake us, but He does not fail us in the strength, grace, wisdom, needed so as to give firmness and power. In nothing does He fail us. He is always with us, and with us for, and in, the conflict. The Lord will make war with Amalek; but it is in Israel, but *God's* war. Thus divine strength and power with us, in faithful goodness, is the first and blessed groundwork for our hearts in the conflict.

It leads to another principle: *confiding* faith, courage. "Be strong and of a good courage." God calls us to confidence and strength of heart in His strength, for we shall succeed in the work He has given us. This too is blessing. Take courage, for you shall do the work. Why not, if the work be His and He be with us?

But this has a special bearing worthy of all note. You shall divide the land

—“only be thou strong and very courageous;” no drawing back, no being terrified, shrinking before the power of the enemy. “In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.” Satan is there, but if there we have a free courage, God is there, witness of ruin to Satan’s instruments, of sure salvation to those who have God with them. There is no question, (if we are grasshoppers, and our enemies giants, and the walls up to heaven,) if *God* be there. Of what consequence was the height of a wall, if it fell at the blast of a ram’s horn? What matter that the sea is rough, if Christ is there to make us walk on it? What good its being smooth, if He be not? Now mark what courage is shown in, “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do all that my servant Moses commanded thee!” We need courage to obey. It seems folly. The world is against us. There seems no sense, often, in the prescriptions of

the word of God. Our own fleshly ease is interested in not being so particular. The path is different from all the world. It supposes a living God, who acts and notices all things, to whom we belong and whose will is everything to us. Of this the world knows nothing. To do God's will and simply obey His word requires courage in the face of the world, courage with our own hearts. To this we are called. "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do all that the Lord has commanded us." It is the courage of faith which looks to God. This is the way of prospering in the conflict. God's strength is employed in helping us in the path of God's will, not out of it. Then no matter where we go, what the difficulties, how long the journey seems, He makes our way prosperous: "Whithersoever thou goest."

This leads to another and natural consequence, but one of great importance, because it not only informs us of the will of God, but keeps us in His presence, and familiar with the ideas,

thoughts, ways, hopes, the whole manner of our God. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein, for thus shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success." Compare Psalm i. This meditation of God's word, of course, makes us know His will. But it does a great deal more. It gives the habitual delight of the heart to be in what God reveals, in what He delights in. We acquire His (that is, the true but divine) way of thinking of things; not the side of the vain show of this world. Our own hearts are formed by and in this divine and blessed apprehension of things. Oh what a light it is, and how does the vanity of this world appear what it is! "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Besides, the soul is kept subject to God in meditating His word: an immense point

morally. Nor is this all. It secures the communications of His grace. "I have called you friends, for whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Owing the word of God is owning God in this world as He has spoken. But I must pass on.

The next ground the Lord gives is, "Have not I commanded thee?" Nothing gives greater confidence than this. "We ought to obey God," says Peter. If I am even going right, but do not surely know that I am doing God's will, the least difficulty casts all into doubt, and all my courage is destroyed. When I know that I am doing God's will, difficulties are no matter. I meet them on the road. But for obedience to God's will, God's power is there; and the heart, knowing that it is doing God's will, has no distrust. Uprightness would fear if it might be self, but uprightness fears nothing, hesitates in nothing, when it knows it is doing God's will. It can appeal to any one if *that* ought not to be done. "Have not I commanded thee; be strong and of

a good courage." And then we have therewith the positive assurance, "The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

A further principle is brought out in the case of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. It is given to us in these divine wars to combat for others. This is an immense privilege. I have to combat to possess more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ, to realize more of His life and of the knowledge of Him, to have the vineyards as well as the oliveyards of Canaan, and the old corn of the land; in a word, to possess what is given me in Christ. But it is given to us to combat in every way for God's people also. Paul (2 Cor. i. 11) was dependent on the poor praying saints, it might be on some poor bed-ridden widow, for the gifts by which he carried on his active warfare in the Lord's field. He himself was labouring unceasingly, both in prayer and the ministry of the word, to put God's people in possession of their privileges. This is an immense pri-

vilege. Not only we are saved, blessed, made partakers of glory, joy in God; but God is pleased to make us partners, co-workers under Him in His own divine privilege of love and of blessing. This is grace indeed! Surely we must know it, as its objects, to witness it; but God's love in us flows forth in love to make it known to others.

Note another thing. If we are doing God's will and work we may reckon on Him for all that is dear to us, and in which we are interested. We could not keep it without God were present. He can keep it without us if we are doing His will and service in love. The two and a half tribes could leave their little ones and all that they had behind, to go armed to the war to help their brethren. No doubt, no fear, no hesitation! Such is the path of faith. It counts on God in the path of obedience to His known will. He has divine wisdom for every step, and divine power. Both are in Christ. We cannot know wisdom perfectly, nor see the end or the bearing of many things. But He who

gave us the word did, and we are guided in the word according to that perfect knowledge.

J. N. D.

THE SALVATION OF GOD.

“The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they will hear it.” (Acts xxviii.) What a fact that is, that it is “the salvation of God;” nothing less than that great and blessed thing that has been now sent of God into this wide, wide world! God will satisfy Himself, when He speaks in *law*, to speak in a sequestered nook of the earth, and in the hearing of the smallest of all the nations; but when He comes to speak of grace or of salvation, at the end of law, He must let the whole earth hear.

And of salvation He had been speaking from the beginning. The first promise, “it shall bruise thy head,” told of it. Patriarchal stories, Mosaic ordinances, prophetic voices, evangelic re-

ords, all had witnessed it; and now that God was leaving Israel and going abroad, would He go as bearing with Him less or other than this same glorious and precious thing, His own salvation, counselled and accomplished by Himself?

The close of the book of the Acts tells us this; and then all the Epistles, in different ways, unfold the excellencies and the glories of this salvation; and then in the Apocalypse we find this same thing, the salvation of God, celebrated in the heavens and on the earth of the millennial world, in the nations of the blest, and in the ages of eternity.

Salvation is too great a thought for the heart of man to suggest. God must provide us with it. The *religious* mind of man resents it as inconsistent with the obligations he owes to God, and with the relationship and responsibility under which he stands to Him. The *moral* sense resents it as being no security for practical life and righteousness. How deeply at fault they both are! How unequal is the best human thing to

reach the divine! While neither man's religion, nor man's morality give toleration to the idea of salvation, God, as we see, is occupied with it from first to last. The mention of it, the history of it, the gradual display of it, the exercise of it, illustrations of it in one sinner after another, stretch along the whole volume. He dispenses it now, and calls on us to enjoy it; He will perfect it by and by, and will call on us to celebrate it.

Having, as we said, begun to tell of itself as soon as it was needed, that is, as soon as sin entered, in the very first promise, and having given further and various notice of itself in patriarchal, Mosaic, and prophetic ages, when the Son, in due time, was manifested, when the Word was made flesh, salvation, so to speak, was presented in a person. God in flesh was named "Jesus;" and this because "he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus is the imperishable name. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It is the name which abides in bloom and

freshness, the unfading title which eternity has no power to efface. Time wears away the rocks, eternity will do nothing with that name, save to celebrate it. "Jesus," or Saviour, was the first word written by the finger of God in the record-book of this world of sin, and it has ever since been kept, like the bow in the cloud, in the freshness of its first hour. It is the unchanging, unchangeable, name. God's salvation, the anointed Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the enduring, pervading, commanding thought. It is not the *unutterable*, but it is the *imperishable* name. Israel under the law found the divine name to be too high, too distant, too sacred for human lips. It was the unutterable name. But the sinner under grace talks of the divine name now, and will for ever.

The salvation of God comprehends a wondrous system of high and glorious privileges, which are all ours, through the faith of Jesus. I have said that it is in the Epistles specially we get an account of this great comprehension. As for instance, we there learn that

divine righteousness, sonship, and the spirit of adoption, the indwelling Spirit, the glorified body, translation in the hour of the Lord's coming, share in the kingdom, and place in the house of the Father, acceptance in the Beloved, the confidence and friendship of the Lord, and inheritance of all things with Him, His own eternity—these are among the high conditions of those who are in the salvation of God.

But while it comprehends all this and more of like excellency, that on which it rests is simple as it can be. It is *satisfaction*—the satisfaction which God has found in the sacrifice on Calvary. This sustains everything. Call our good things by what name we may, justification, acceptance, grace, peace, glory, sanctification, sonship, reconciliation, redemption, or whatever description in name it may carry, all rests on the simple fact that Christ has satisfied God, in that which He has done for us sinners. The rent veil and the resurrection, His seat in the highest heavens, on the right hand of the throne there

in the character of the Purger of sins, and the presence here of the Holy Ghost, are the blessed witnesses of this satisfaction; such august and wondrous witnesses as none can gainsay them on the side of our accuser, and none can exceed them as from God Himself. We are to accept salvation from God because He has accepted satisfaction from Christ.

We have to receive it with all thankful, worshipping assurance. Confiding faith is the due answer to abounding grace. If God have rent the veil, it is obedience in the sinner to enter. If God be satisfied, we ought to be reconciled—consciously saved. Satisfaction sustains everything, as we have said. When I lay my burthens and loads on God's foundations, knowing that they will be sustained there, I am *glorifying*, as well as *using*, those foundations.

And, further, the salvation of God is a *present* salvation. We wait not for a judgment-day to accredit the cross. The rent vail has already accredited it, and so has the resurrection, and so has the mission of the Holy Ghost; and so like-

wise, faith in the cross waits not to know its rights and privileges and possessions, it is entitled to know them *now*—"receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." The judgment-day will have its own business to do, but it is not committed to it to accredit either the cross or faith in the cross. The cross has already led Jesus to His glory; faith in the cross leads the sinner at once to peace and favour and hope and joy,* to the things that accompany salvation, and that witness a present salvation of the soul.

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour," is language which conveys the sense of a present salvation. Mary's song and Zacharias' prophecy, are breathings of the soul over the like blessing. "He hath visited and redeemed," is the burthen of each. Simeon, too, when holding the child in his arms, spoke as one who knew that

* These things form the *condition* of the believer; his *experience* may be below them. He has title to them, though he may read his title imperfectly, as with clouded apprehensions.

he was, at that moment, in possession of salvation; and Anna spoke of Jesus to all those in Jerusalem, who were then looking for redemption. In her esteem, that child was the end of their expectations, set for the very purpose of turning hope into enjoyment.

And surely, I may say, the joy that fills all this most precious scenery, which itself fills the opening chapters of St. Luke, is not the joy of hope, but of fruition; not the joy of a probable, but of a certain salvation. Heaven there is seen announcing such a blessing, faith on earth is seen accepting it. And then the passage in Isaiah, with which the Lord opens His ministry, as we get into the fourth chapter of the same evangelist, tells of a present salvation in the same way. The spirit that filled the prophet of old was the spirit which was now uttering Himself through anointed vessels, such as Mary, Zacharias, and Elizabeth, and was of one mind with the glory and the angelic hosts touching God's salvation. For that prophet, like these vessels, like the glory and the

angels, told of a *present* healing, quickening, cleansing, reconciling work, "an acceptable year;" a season or ministry of acceptance for sinners with God, as now really and actually arrived.

All this is in concert. And shortly afterwards, in this same Gospel, Peter illustrates personal engagement of this present salvation — salvation *on the spot*. He discovered himself in the light of the glory. There convicted, he takes his place and character as "a sinful man." But quickly Jesus told this convicted sinner not to fear — His language to all such — and Peter receiving this word, walked forth, or rose up, in the liberty of a present salvation. He feared not, he doubted not. He no longer judged that distance from the Lord became him, but he left all else in the distance, that he might then and there, at that moment and on that spot, in nearness to Christ begin the long and bright and happy future of his eternity. (Luke v.)

And a little further still, a little onward in the same chapter, as though to

bring this matter to the simplest, surest conclusion, we get the case of the palsied man. There, the Lord says, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." And when this offends the religious human mind which instinctively thinks of forgiveness as a future thing, a thing to be reserved for another and a higher court, for the day of judgment rather than for the cross of Christ to decide and pronounce, Jesus has but to repeat the thought, and say, "the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins;" and seals it by healing the man of his palsy. He insists on a *present* salvation. If the prophecy of Isaiah, as we lately observed, were in company with the angels and the glory and the anointed vessels of the Spirit, so are the works and the words of the Son of man now.

It is, indeed, salvation that has come down from heaven to earth, a present salvation, and all join in uttering and celebrating this great mystery. But how, I ask, has this been communicated? What style has accompanied the gift? Does cheerfulness wait on the occasion?

The opening of St. Luke, already referred to, is full of character in connexion with this. All is salvation there, and all is joy in heaven. The angels speak of salvation, and so do the vessels anointed and filled by the Spirit, and rapture of no common measure animates them all in this their service. The glory itself, angelic hosts, and anointed vessels, shepherds, priests, old men, babes, and maidens, and long-waiting, patient saints, are alike summoned to share the joy of that moment, when salvation was coming down from heaven to earth. And I now further ask, has heaven repented of this joy, or changed its tone in the sight or thought of the salvation of God? Let the 15th chapter of that same Gospel give its answer to this. It will tell us that this joy is as fresh this moment as it was in the day of Luke i., ii. If it accompanied the announcement of it at the first, it has ever since, and still does, celebrate the acceptance of it by a poor sinner.

Excellent surely these secrets are! Can we get our welcome to God's salva-

tion sealed by more blessed witnesses? Can we doubt that our title is written out under our eye, clear, large, and simple? No perplexing difficulties as to meaning and force, as to what it conveys to us, when we read it. We cannot mistake it, nor do we want any lawyer to give us his opinion upon it. The morning stars sang together, when of old the foundations of the earth were laid: God's own joy and glory were in the works of His hands, and His delights as with the sons of men; and His creature could not have walked in the garden He had prepared and furnished for him with a doubtful heart. He could not but have read his assured title to be there, rich and bright and plentiful as it all was. It was not too good for him, for the Lord God had planted it expressly for him. And the title of a believing sinner to the salvation of God is written out in the same language, and may be enjoyed with the same liberty and assurance of heart.

Following the thought of God's salvation still for a little longer, I may put

another question. To whom does this salvation address itself?

Poverty and impotency were made to mark the scene that was visited by it at the first, the poverty of Mary of Nazareth, and the impotency of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the childless Abraham and Sarah of that day. And when it comes to be ministered by the Lord Himself, it is only the needy that get it, yea, they who have discovered their need as *sinner*s.

Blessed thought! Sinners are welcome to Christ, but none other.

This we see in the same Peter, the fisherman, of the 5th of St. Luke. In him conscience and faith did their several needed work. He discovers *himself* in the light of the glory which then filled his boat, and then he discovered *the stranger* that could set him at ease in the presence of that overwhelming moment. He was a sinner, and conscience had now discovered that: the Divine Stranger was a Saviour, and faith had now discovered that. The sinner and the Saviour, that instant, began eternity

together. The poor fisherman's boat was holy ground, a sanctuary; the synagogue at Nazareth, a little before, with all its religious show of worship and of sanctity, was common and profane.

And thus is it still. We see the link that is formed between God and us. We see the joy with which God in the highest, and all that surrounded Him, or went forth from Him, ushered in the materials that formed that link. Grace and faith have formed it as between the Saviour and the sinner, joy waits on this mighty process on the part of heaven; liberty and assurance are to mark the heart of the sinner, as he enters upon it and takes his place in this wondrous mystery.

And now let me ask, has "the salvation of God," promised and undertaken, and sent forth into whatever scene of judgment it might have been, has it, I ask, ever disappointed the poor, wretched, exposed or guilty sinner that committed himself to it?

At the beginning it was sent after

guilty Adam, as he hid himself behind the trees of the garden. The promise about the woman's seed carried it to him there; he trusted it; he committed himself to it, and came forth; and the Lord God justified his faith, redeemed His own promise, made good his own pledged salvation, and covered Adam with a robe of His own making from head to foot.

It was sent to Noah, who was then in the midst of a world that had been already judged of God, and was soon to have that judgment executed upon it. Noah trusted it, like Adam. According to the word he prepared an ark; and the Lord God put him into it and shut the door upon him; and he was as safe in the midst of the waters of death, as though he had been on the heights of Ararat, or in millennial days, or in the glories of heaven itself.

It was sent to Israel in the heart of judged Egypt—it was sent to Rahab in the heart of judged Canaan. But to both, all its undertakings were fully verified. Israel was saved, and Rahab was saved; though the sword was there

both in Egypt and in Jericho, to do its work of death and judgment.

And now, after these patterns, and others like them, it has come forth into this wide world of sinners; and no sinner will it ever disappoint, no sinner can it ever disappoint. It is God's—the salvation of Him who cannot lie. The present evil world is as deeply under judgment as the world before the flood was, as Egypt or as Canaan. The salvation of God is near to us as it was then to Noah, to Israel or to Rahab.

It was then, and is still, to be enjoyed by faith. As we read, “the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will *hear* it.” Faith comes by hearing. It did so with Adam, Noah, Israel, and Rahab. We have, like them, to *hear* it; to receive by faith these tidings of it. We cannot get it by working. We dare not count on it by deserving. It is God's salvation, “prepared,” as we read, by Him. (Luke ii. 28—32.) It is counselled, wrought out, revealed by Himself. We have but to gaze and to listen; to be debtors

to the provisions of divine grace for the most ruined and wretched condition in which creature sin and misery can find themselves. And as salvation has thus been *provided* by God, so is it *sent* forth by Him. It has been prepared by Him in the face of all people, and now is it published there. (See Luke ii. 31; Acts xxviii. 28.)

FRAGMENT.

(Rev. ii.)

In coming to the Church of Ephesus, the Lord was coveting fruit from them. It was a thing He desired to find. To Smyrna He says, "I know thy works." And what follows? There was what God saw in them, and what Satan could see in them: "Tribulation, poverty (but thou art rich)." The saint is often the most spiritual when in the most *humbling* circumstances, and the reverse. When David was on the top of the tree, his will was breaking out. Never was

he so near God as in his adversity. We ought to be able to pass through prosperity without loss, being instructed, as Paul, "to be full, and to be empty; to abound, and to suffer need." Paul goes right through to the end of his course, and the end was lost in brightness. We should look to be able also; but generally it is easier to go through the afflictions, tribulations, &c., with the soul right with God. "I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not." Here is the old tale again at Smyrna—profession without reality—saying they are Jews when they are not so; and the effect of their wishing to get a place brings in trial for Smyrna. If a person begins doing things for his own honour, professing it to be for God, it will be sure to end in casting off God altogether. If he begins with God he will end with God. We have need to be jealous over ourselves, whether what we hang outside be according to the true expression inside. The spiritual energy of Paul was such, that what came outside was what was

within; and nothing more came out than was within.

Walking with God is the only safeguard of a saved sinner. I would rather come up the day after the company, if I could not go up that day. Perhaps it might be my own fault; but it is better than to go on with others, *without God* leading me. The great thing is to walk in the same spirit as Christ walked; as He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." *Take God's will*, and suffer in it; that is the happy thing. The most precious part of Paul's service was in *suffering*—not in doing. So also Christ's when He went to the cross.

Those who are seen by no one, but suffering God's will, may be doing much more than where there is much to attract with "see here, or see there."

The contrast in ver. 10 is between the *ten days tribulation* and "the crown of life." The second death has no power over the overcomer.

PHILIPPIANS III., IV.

I follow up a previous paper by sending you some remarks on the third chapter of Philippians, to which I will now add some on the fourth, which has occupied my mind a little since.

Salvation in this epistle is looked at as before the Christian; not as an uncertainty, but as a thing not yet attained. It is the actual possession of glory, the new estate of man, in actual glory, in Christ ascended on high, which alone is in view. Christ has laid hold of the believer for it, but he is looking to lay hold on it. Christ seen in that glory, and the apostle had so seen Him, in fact, is everything. Being thus found in Him is what Paul looks for, for righteousness, as all else, in that day. When he gets actually before God, laying aside everything Jewish that might exalt him, everything human, his only thought is to be found in Christ. This puts the new estate of man in a very striking position. The whole Christian estate is looked at as future, because in resurrection; its being actually attained being

the whole matter in hand. Hence justification, righteousness itself, is seen as actual acceptance in Christ, when we arrive before God. We come before God in Christ. The apostle unequivocally looks for a resurrection-state and glory. Till he has that he has never attained, is not yet perfect. The present *state* of man even supposing he has been quickened of God, is his state as born of the first Adam; not simply because of sin, for the apostle supposes here the Christian to be walking above it, always walking in the Spirit, making progress towards *glory*, but in no way occupied with sin. But he sees the Christian needing to be brought into this new state identified with Christ in glory. If he had the whole righteousness which the flesh or the first Adam was capable of, and of which the law was the rule, *this was only the first man, not the second*; he would not have it. It was not Christ, God's righteousness by faith.

He had seen Christ the second man, the last Adam, accepted in glory. He had been laid hold of to be conformed

to this, this wholly new state and condition of man according to God's righteousness. It had displaced all else in his mind. He could be content with nothing else nor less. The two were incompatible; and he could not have the old man's place, even if it were righteous, and the new man's too. He counts all these things which honoured and accredited the first man, the self, Paul, as loss and dung. The risen glorified man is before us. It is not however here considered as that which has justified us; that inasmuch as we have died with Christ, who made atonement for us, and that we are risen with Him according to the value of that work in virtue of which as of His person He is risen, we are justified, and our acceptance witnessed before God. It is not with this view of judicial acceptance the resurrection is viewed here; but as a new state, into which in its full result, we are to enter, including of course divine righteousness, but the whole new state of glory. This puts the new estate into which Christianity brings us in a very strong light.

The old man, the whole old estate is done with in the apostle's mind, righteousness and all; and his mind is fixed on the new, that is on Christ Himself; but this as involving his own place in glory, in having part hereafter, in "the resurrection from among the dead," as Christ was: "That I may win Christ." "If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from among the dead." (Εξαναστασις.)

This leads us directly to the great principle of the chapter: the earnest undistracted following after this glory, after Christ Himself, and heeding nothing else, counting all as worthless for its attainment. The former chapter, we have seen, presented Christ in His humiliation, leading the heart to a like manifestation of graciousness in our path and ways with others here below. This gives that energy of spiritual pursuit, from the second glorified man being set before our eyes, which sets us above the world and every motive in it, and everything which added importance to the old self, so as to give its just and

heart-enlarging object to the new man, and make us heavenly-minded, and withal undistracted in our christian course.

It is one of the beauties of Christianity, that it gives, through our perfect reconciliation in Christ, the pure peacefulness of affections perfectly happy in an existing relationship, and with it the highest object of hope, which urges to unceasing activity. These are the two forming elements of human nature for good; both, in the highest, in a divine way, are found in Christ.

But to pursue our chapter, which takes up the latter of these principles.

We have the fullest element of satisfying glory for ourselves, the prize of our calling above, the resurrection from among the dead; yet all selfishness is taken out of it. What clothed self with honour is, as we have seen, all loss. It helped to set up the old man. The Christian's object is Christ, which implies getting rid of the first altogether. It exalts man, but not *self*. When modern infidelity would exalt man, it simply exalts self. Christianity exalts

man, even to heavenly glory and divine excellency, but it sets aside self wholly. "What was gain *to me*," says the apostle, "I counted loss for Christ." Learning is gain for self. To be English, French, &c.: to have mine own righteousness as a reputation in the world, or a title with God, is self. I am what others are not. The world wants these motives—of course it does. It has no other. Energy is produced by them, but there is no moral advance. Self remains the spring, the centre, of human activity.

"Self-love (we hear) but serves the virtuous
mind to wake,

As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake."

A larger circle may be produced round self, but self remains the centre still.

We can see this even in religious things.

"Master, that thou shouldest give us to sit, one on thy right hand and another on thy left hand, in thy kingdom." This was self; a good place which others would not have. None of this is found here. "That I may win Christ," the highest blessing, the blessedest affections,

but all transferring the heart from self to Christ.

But see further. It transferred the affections to what in itself was supremely excellent, to an object which was the adequate object of delight to God the Father. God has given to us to delight in what He finds His sufficient object of delight in too. What a tale this tells of our true reconciliation to God! Not merely judicial reconciliation to God, which was needed, but of the elevation of our moral nature to the measure of divine delights and fellowship with Him; though, of course, ever recipient, and glad to be so from love, He ever the divine giver: but in Christ the one object of delight. In the creature, though there may be a suited nature, as evidently there must, yet the moral state of the soul is formed and characterized by its objects. Here we are made partakers of the divine nature and have divine objects. But this is not *now* in rest. That will be our heavenly state. We are living in the midst of a world by which Satan seeks to seduce us by

acting on the old man. While there is thankfulness and courage because Christ has laid hold on us, yet Christ before us in hope, leads out the affections in energy; and while it has begun by delivering us from selfish recurrence to our own importance, leads us now on in superiority to worldly objects by the absorbing attraction of Christ. We are kept humble by the consciousness that we have not attained; energetic in sanctified affections because we have Christ to attain. Delivered from the world by the absorbing power of a divine object acting on the new man. This gives singleness of purpose, and thus undistracted power, while the judgment is formed solely on the way things bear on Christ. Everything is thus estimated in the highest way by a perfect criterion, and that in the affections, though indeed, in moral things, true judgment cannot exist without this.

Further, though it be in no way the chief or highest element, there is, when the world does come before us, the power of contrast. For all this, surely

the action of the Holy Ghost is needed; but I speak of the way it operates, not of its gracious source. This gives, moreover, superiority to difficulties. This is the force of "by any means"—not a doubt, but whatever it may cost, whatever road I may have to take, so as I attain, I am content; yea, I can rejoice in suffering and death—I shall be so much the more like the Christ I am desirous of attaining. Note here, he seeks the power of resurrection first; that, knowing the divine energy of this new life, which takes him in spirit out of the present one, the sufferings or death of the first, as the fruit of devotedness to Christ, were only conformity to Him. And thus, even if it were by such means as death itself, he should attain to the glory of the new state into which Christ had risen. (Not new indeed to Him personally, but to man, to the human nature, which in grace He had taken and carried back with Him into glory.) This gave its full character to His walk as to its daily energy. Having this state of resurrec-

tion from among the dead in view, he never could count himself to have attained in this life, nor to be perfect; for for him to be perfect was to be like Christ in glory. He followed after, that he might attain and apprehend that (lay hold upon and possess it) for which Christ had apprehended him. Two things ensued; he followed nothing else, had no other object. But this was not all. He did follow this earnestly and undividedly. It was not merely that he disapproved of certain things and was inert, but the absorbing power of one had delivered him from all else. But this, while it took his heart off the others, fixed it on this. But this object on which his mind was fixed was always before him, not attained; every day brighter to his spirit, but not possessed. This kept him looking straight forward, and never occupied with the ground he had passed over. He forgot the things which were behind, and reached forward to those things which were before, pressing towards those things which were before. The man who would stop to contemplate the

ground gone over in a race would not get on in it, would soon be passed in it. Self would come in; the manna would breed worms; the heart be off its object.

This gives another marked effect of this energy of the single eye. It looks exclusively at what is heavenly. Its calling is on high, its hopes and thoughts fixed on that; not looking, says the apostle, on what is seen, but on what is not seen. This gives a heavenly temperament and habit to the whole man. His conversation is in heaven; His relationships of life are all up there. There is thankfulness and elevation in this. It is God's calling; His calling us above, (*avw*), and in Christ Jesus. The heart is intelligent as to its source and way. I do not dwell on what the apostle puts in contrast. Minding earthly things, men are fixed on what can cause no progress, on what takes them off what is heavenly, what is pure and divine. But it goes further; they are enemies of the cross. The cross was death to this world. It marked the place of what was divine and heavenly in this world.

The saint glories in dying to the world. He who lives in it, in spirit, is the enemy of that. The end is destruction. One thing remains, to carry out this hope of the Christian to completion—Christ's coming. We have these hopes, "this treasure in earthen vessels." Christ shall come and change the body of our humiliation and fashion it like to His glorious body. Then what we have had in hope, in desire forming our souls after it, will be actually accomplished in glory. We shall be like Christ and with Him.

Such is the character of energy which delivers from, and gives the victory over, all that is in the world, setting our affections on things above, not on things on the earth, making Christ Himself, as He is on high, the bright and blessed object of our souls. The fourth chapter, as this has run to some length, I reserve for another paper.

It tells us of the calmness and superiority to circumstances which characterizes the Christian in this world through faith in Christ.

J. N. D.

A SERIES.

No. 7.

PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION.

In considering the subject of sanctification, it is important for us to take into account the primary meaning of the word as used in Scripture. Sanctification in its principal and ordinary meaning signifies the actual conveyance by which anything on earth is devoted or passed over to God, of which we have abundant examples in the Old Testament with reference to men and animals. The firstborn of man and beast, for instance, were to be "holy unto the Lord;" that is to say, they were to be devoted or consigned to Him as His possession. Consequently, when we find the word "Sanctification" in the New Testament, it is no new idea to the mind of Scripture; and is there, too, used in this, its primary signification, but with a deeper moral obligation on those thus sanctified or set apart, because consummated in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Hence we find in Hebrews

x., "By *which will* we are sanctified;" and again, "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." These Scriptures teach us that we who had been strangers and enemies to God are now by His will set apart and passed over to Him, and therefore this is called "Sanctification of the Spirit." No practical experience can ever raise us higher, but practical experience lets us into the wondrous blessedness of this our position. God, in His grace, *has* sanctified us unto Himself, for Christ is of God made unto us sanctification, as well as righteousness and redemption; and when the Lord unfolds what would be His heavenly desires for His disciples, He prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." That is, that they might enter into the practical blessedness of their position. That position was such an one that He could say of them, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified truly." His was positional sanctification; for

moral, He did not need. It was going to the Father, setting Himself apart in the heavens in separation from all here. And this—His exaltation—His positional sanctification, would necessarily conduce to our full sanctification, because of our association with Him as seated in the heavenlies, outside and above it all. *This* it was that He desired and prayed to be known by us practically. The moment God draws us unto Himself we belong and are set apart to Him; and we never can have better sanctification than what He, according to His will, has there and then made over to us in His beloved Son. This, as well as all the blessings of grace, are gifts and not exploits, but the experimental blessedness of the gifts cannot be known to anyone, unless he learns the value and greatness of it. Although when called, he is really sanctified and set apart to God, and “the consecration of his God is upon his head;” yet he requires to be kept in the power and responsibility of the blessing, in order to be in conscious possession of

it. No amount of acquaintance or experience of divine sanctification improves in the least degree his own nature, but according as he learns the grace of God, and therefore, if faithful, the older and longer he is in the school, the more he will know of what sanctification introduces him to; and thus he will have more practical resource to baffle and stifle the ever varying and daily increasing subtlety of his own evil heart. I believe the activities of nature, which sorely tried a young Christian, would prove comparatively trifling to an advanced one; but on the other hand, the subtle and suited ones addressed to the older would have overwhelmed the younger; so that if the experiences of sanctification increase, the necessity for them increases also.

Having said so much of this subject in general, I shall now dwell a little on the mode and process by which our souls are experienced therein. When we are worshipping, we are properly enjoying the result of our sanctification, and, therefore, that which leads us into wor-

ship; or, when we have declined from it, restores us thereto—must lead us into the sense of our sanctification, of which it is, as we have said, the result. Now for our souls to be happily led into worship, and for them to be restored to it after failure or falling, are of course two distinct things. The first is the higher; and the latter, as we know, by far the most common and frequent with us: but in either case I believe the mode or process by which we are brought into sanctification is what the apostle expresses in Eph. v. as the “washing of water through the word,” and what the Lord performs in John xiii. when He washes the disciples’ feet.

The moment we fall from our near and separated place with God, from the place of our worship, and where we realize His appropriation of us to Himself, we are defiled; and the first step in restoration is the washing of our feet, or washing us with water through the word. On this order of practical sanctification, i.e., that which we are led into in restoration after failure, I would first

dwell for a little, and detail the order and blessing of this wondrous service in the soul of one sanctified unto God, and who has been a worshipping Nazarite, but who has now defiled the head of his consecration.

We find two distinct offerings under the law which describe to us the two classes of defilement into which we may fall; the one is the offering for leprosy, (Lev. xiv.,) and the other that of the red heifer. (Num. xix.) I consider leprosy as the sin of my nature acting openly in the flesh: and what has reached that point of activity, that it is not only injurious to myself, but to others; it is contagious. I am a bad example, affecting others by my evil, though it does not assume the malignant stage until there is a protracted or violent expression of the workings of nature. For this order of defilement two birds alive and clean were offered, while the red heifer was the provision for that of another order. It was for all manner of defilements which spring from association or contact—that which is, in one

sense, *outside* myself—what I contract from circumstances, influences, and the like. There are also two delays or difficulties to a soul which may be conscious that he is not in a worshipping state—one is, that he does not see his sin or defilement; and the other, that he is unbelieving in adopting the means of restoration. There is often difficulty in discovering how I have been defiled; but if I seek the Lord and listen to His word, I am sure to be corrected; and if I obtain a knowledge of Him in His work and grace, my soul passes into the freshness of acceptance. Sensible need of His grace always precedes sensible relief from it. If I feel that I need His mercy when I draw near, I find the throne of grace, where I obtain what I need. If I really feel my need, and am convicted by His word, I have in the spirit of my mind renounced and abandoned my evil ways; and in looking unto God, thus convicted and separated in heart and judgment from my former way, I find through Christ the throne of grace, where there is a renewal of my

practical sanctification, and additional grace imparted to preserve me from the like in time to come. The sin of which we have thoroughly repented before God, and from the defilement of which we have been truly restored, is ever the sin we are the least likely to fall into again, at least in that particular line. I do not say but that, as the same nature always exists, it may and does break out in lines very kindred; but I think it will be found that the actual and identical line of evil is feared and avoided. Abram does not go down again into Egypt, though he does to the land of the Philistines.

I now desire to trace in detail how a soul is restored; for when restored, he has entered on practical sanctification. Leprosy, I have remarked, is sin acting in my flesh, and by example injurious to others. Peter's denial of the Lord partook of this character, as also does unchecked anger or evil speaking; but I need not enumerate the many sins that come under this head. The *word* of Jesus and His *look* convicted Peter.

These two—the *word* and the *look* are always connected, for unless the soul hears the word under His eye, there is not true conviction. When there is true conviction there is repentance; and where there is repentance there is clear discontinuance of the evil, or what is typically expressed by “healing.” (Lev. xiv.) The evil influence is gone, the claim of sanctification is renovated in the soul. Chastening may be needed for this process, but when “healing” has set in, the soul is turned to the Lord; and then is the process of cleansing, which, as detailed in this chapter, typifies the experience in the soul of what Christ is for it. Two birds were taken for the leper that was to be cleansed, one of which was killed over running water, and the other, with cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop, was dipped in the blood of the one which was killed, and the leper sprinkled seven times and pronounced clean. That is to say, Christ having passed through death but now risen, proclaims to me as Priest, through the Spirit, the seven-fold or perfect assur-

ance that I am clean. My eye is engaged with Him, the risen One, for my justification, as the leper with the living bird. The soul enjoys and is revived in what Christ is for it now before God, and the sense of distance or judgment is removed. I enter into fresh and greatly enhanced appreciation of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ; but though I have full confidence in His reception of me, still, as we see with Peter, there is something more required, as is typified here, before he takes his place as fully restored. The leper could return to the camp before he could return to his house; though on re-entering the camp his appearance bore evidence of his separation from his former self—his clothes being washed and all his hair shaved off; yet, after seven days, every particle of hair is again shaved; his own conscience is assured of the ground of his acceptance expressed by the offerings on the eighth day, and he receives from the priest a personal, confidential assurance of his full restoration; his ear, his right hand, and his right foot

being marked with significant tokens of the same. The blood and the oil with which each of these parts were touched, I understand as the purification and practical consecration of the whole man in the activities of his nature, to God; and to express the sense in the soul which Peter enjoyed after his conference with the Lord in John xxi.; where, while He distressed him as to the question of his love, He re-assures his heart by asking him to tend His sheep and to follow Him; which Peter could not have done unless the whole question between himself and the Lord had been settled. Nothing so restores a person to the sense of a place of nearness once his, and which he has forfeited by transgression, as to be entrusted again; and then it is the believer feels, that not only is he cleansed before God, but that the Lord deals with him *as clean*; "he shall be clean," is the word for the leper (verse 20) after all this process which we have noticed. Practical sanctification has necessarily this double sense, that "I am" both *to* God, and also *for*

God; hence the Lord sanctifies by cleansing us with washing of water through the word. This is ever the first step. He speaks to me through His word, and then the Spirit presents to my soul, according to the nature of my defilement, the ground of my restoration; for Jesus Christ the righteous is my advocate with the Father, and therefore I confess, and am forgiven, and "cleansed from all unrighteousness."

Now, in the red heifer I think is typified the cleansing of the defilement which we imbibe from evil association and contact, because of our susceptibility to evil and natural inclination to it; and hence the ashes in the running water expressed in type the sense which the Spirit of God conveys to the soul of Christ's judgment for sin; a judgment executed, and now passed and over, and in which was included everything in nature, from the cedar to the hyssop, but of which the ashes are the evidences; the sense of this being reproduced and certified in my soul establishes me in exoneration from personal defilement.

Each of the offerings in the Old Testament presented some distinct line in the great antitype; but we must always remember that He fulfilled them all at one and the same time; and, therefore, while we are looking at Him as the antitype of one, the Spirit is, in fact, engaging our souls with the antitype of all; so that while the leper is engaged with, and learning afresh in his soul the depth and perfection of Christ's work for him, his eye being set on the living Christ, he is also consciously receiving purification from the water of separation, because he has been defiled by contact with his own nature. Whether our sin be an open outbreak of the evil of our nature, or defilement contracted from the evil around us, the first entrance into our sanctification is by cleansing. We are restored into happy consciousness of the virtue of our Lord and Saviour for us; and all this is comprised in His washing our feet, and must necessarily be the beginning of our practical sanctification, because we cannot be before God unless cleansed; but now being

cleansed, sanctification progresses. I have dwelt long on the cleansing, because I apprehend that it is ignorance or uncertainty about this which hinders many souls from entering into and enjoying their sanctification. In order to have the sense of this cleansing, it is, we may thankfully say, by no means necessary that I fall into sin or contract defilement; but as cleansed, whether learned in the way of restoration after failure, or in the more honourable and blessed way of estimating my sin in the light of God's presence without yielding to it, I am in sanctification; and trouble, whether it be that of heart, or service, or tribulation from the world, all these only contribute to establish me in sanctification, for in each and all I find myself dependent on my Lord: and hence He prays in John xvii., "Sanctify them through thy truth." Now here I learn the power that authorizes my sanctification. Unless cleansed, I could not take that ground; but now, through the truth, I find that I am detached from the world and attached to God.

The truth has declared to me the Father, and I cannot therefore be of the world. The world knows me not, (the born of God,) as it knew Him not. The more I realize that I am born of God, the more I must not only be separated from all that is contrary to God, but I must also be consciously in my new relationship *with* God; and this is practical sanctification. The action on my soul of the wondrous truth that God is my Father in a world at enmity with Him must necessarily expose me to all its enmity and opposition; so that this sanctification, the more I enter into it, entails on me the sense of the world's evil oppressing me; because I am maintaining my title before God according to His own revelation to me. This, the practical sanctification, because of sonship or title, introduces my soul into my proper path on earth, always a sorrowing one, and therefore attended with more suffering than joy here. But there is another mode of sanctification, fraught with nothing but joy and entire separation unto God; and this is *positional*,

and not merely title and relationship in an opposing scene. It is positional, I repeat, as Christ's was when He said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified thoroughly." By virtue of association with Him in this, His positional sanctification, we are "sanctified thoroughly;" that is to say, our Saviour has gone to heaven, above all the ruin and evil here, and now by His Spirit He associates us there with Himself. And this is the practical efficacy of the doctrine set forth in Eph. ii., that of being seated with Him in heavenly places. I am "thoroughly sanctified," for my "citizenship is in heaven; from whence I look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change my vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" and the working of the assured anticipation of being like Him leads me practically into the same purity which He is in, ("He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure,") as knowing myself not only contrary to the world in nature and title,

but out of, and apart from, it by association and hope. This is full, practical sanctification. The believer finds himself not only separated to God by title and the claims of relationship, but he also finds that by position and in association with his Lord and Saviour, he is unto God and for God in distinct, sensible separation in spirit from what is contrary to God, looking for full deliverance in a glorified body and in likeness to Him whom when we see we shall be fully like.

In conclusion, I would recapitulate the how and the when the believer is in practical sanctification. I use the word "practical," I repeat, to show that I do not make sanctification depend on my own attainment, but, being sanctified by God's will, I desire to know the blessing of it and therefore call it "practical."

Well, then, the first part of this blessing, the entrance into known sanctification, is, as we have seen, the cleansing, the consciousness that I am made clean every whit. If this is not known, the power and blessing of sanctification cannot be enjoyed; but cleans-

ing being assured to the soul, *then* I realize my sonship, and the claim of my relationship to God—most happy realizations in themselves, but exposing me, as I walk in the power of them, to the keen sense of the antagonism of all that is in the world, which I exasperate the more, and necessarily feel the more as I maintain my title. And many, many Christians make this the sum and end of their sanctification; that is, they do not see that it calls them to anything further than maintaining themselves in title as God's children in the world; therefore the more holy they are, the more they suffer, and find no place of relief; and this it is, no doubt, that has suggested to some, positive and corporeal exclusion from the world. From this loss and suffering they would have been preserved, if they had apprehended the *position* which they are now called to occupy with Christ in virtue of His positional sanctification; and then, in conscious association with Him, the holy desires in them would find unchecked expression; and they would feel in themselves that both according to God and

before Him, they were "thoroughly sanctified."

May we one and all apprehend the grace of the blessed God, and praise Him through Christ Jesus our Lord.

FRAGMENT.

Rev. ii. 8—11.

The peculiarity of the church of Smyrna is, that it preserved its character before God. There is something very blessed in this state indicated. The end signifies that they would be able to go through death for Christ's sake; and therefore the promise is, that they should not be hurt of the second death, but have a *crown* of life. The character in which Christ comes to them is remarkably blessed. There is none so high as that of the "First and the Last," because it is that which is connected with the Person of the Lord. His title of Alpha and Omega is connected with testimony, the expression of the "Word which was made flesh," &c. The "beginning and the ending" is connected with the human character; but the

“First and the Last” implies something before there was a beginning, and after there is an ending.

Christ comes to this church in this divine character, “the First and the Last,” because the Church is looked at as *divine*. The heavenly character of the Church is another thing—contrasted with the earthly dealing with the Jews, not brought out until Christ has taken His place at God’s right hand. There is another thing also connected with this: there are certain persons got into the heavenlies, without being the Church. The Church is more than heavenly; it is divine—the mystery, His body; and it shows forth thus what Christ has been. It is a higher thing to be able to say, “I am a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” than to say, “I am of the heavenlies.” So here, Christ as the First and Last connects Himself with the Church as Son of God: and it is a higher thing for the Christian to be able to say, I am united to Christ the Son of God, than Christ the Son of man—though He is both.

G I L G A L .

(Joshua v.)

If we take the Book of Joshua to be typical of the position of the Church as presented in the *Epistle to the Ephesians*, "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ," and consequently, in order to the practical enjoyment of the blessings of this position, brought into conflict "with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places," we shall see how important a place "Gilgal" holds in relation to this.

The children of Israel are not at this time in Egypt, the type of the world or a state of nature; nor in the wilderness, the fitting expression of the believer's life of trial in his passage through the world; nor are they yet quietly established in Canaan, the shadowing forth of heavenly rest. They are entering the land under the guidance of Joshua, not Moses, (for the law cannot give possession of the inheritance,) and are about to commence those conflicts, with-

out which the land of promise could not be theirs in possession and enjoyment. For in the Book of Joshua it is to be noted that it is not so much the rest of Canaan that is in prominence, as the conflicts of the people, ("the wars of the Lord,") which were the necessary condition of their possession of the inheritance.

In sovereign mercy God had visited the people in Egypt, breaking the yoke of their bondage, and by the blood of the passover separating them for ever both from Egypt and from its judgment. In application this is redemption from a state of sin, and from God's judgment against sin, by faith in the bloodshedding of Christ: for it is said, "Christ our *passover* is sacrificed for us." So that at the outset of our pilgrimage, and before we have taken a single step in our heavenly journey, trust in the blood of Christ is our full and absolute security against the judgment of our sins—a judgment which will come upon the world on account of sin. Next follows "the salvation of the

Lord," as it is expressed, in bringing the people through the Red Sea, with the utter destruction of their enemies in it, and so placing the sea as an impassable barrier between His people and Egypt. To us this is the passage, by faith, of our souls through death in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that His death and resurrection should be placed by God Himself between us and all the power of the enemy, in token of eternal deliverance from it, and giving also the character of that deliverance, as well as final separation from the world that lies in wickedness:—"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of him who raised him from the dead." Then comes the wilderness, characteristic of the journeyings of the people, and a figure of the trouble and temptation which the people of God find in the world while passing through it as strangers and pilgrims.

Under Joshua a new scene opens. It is the passage of the Jordan effected for Israel by the ark of the covenant going

down into the midst of the river when it overflowed all its banks, so that "all the Israelites passed over on *dry ground*." A wondrous and blessed picture of Christ in His death exhausting all the power of death, and thus making it the ally of his people, and the means of their entering, now by faith, and finally in person, into their heavenly inheritance.

The Jordan must be crossed before Canaan can be possessed even by the people to whom by God's appointment it belongs. There must be in the Christian not only the faith which associates him with the power of the death of Christ as the ground of his justification before God, and the pledge and security to him of eternal redemption; but there must be an entrance by the power of the Spirit into that death and resurrection as the means of bringing him into his heavenly position, and as the power by which alone it can be realized. "If ye then be risen with Christ," says the apostle, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set

your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." This, be it remembered, is not simply laying hold of Christ's death as the power of redemption, and the ground of peace and security: it is an exhortation to the practical entrance of the soul into the death and resurrection of Christ, as participants in it, in order to the affections being placed on the proper objects of the heavenly life and heavenly position into which we have been brought by Christ.

But the Jordan thus passed, what is the first thing that meets us on the Canaan side of it? It is Gilgal: where by means of the circumcision of the people the Lord could say, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." At Gilgal they are delivered from every badge of Egypt and its bondage, to enter as the redeemed people of Jehovah on their inheritance. The obvious lesson to us is, whether we have learnt it or not, that every trace of worldliness is a reproach to those who are called to be a heavenly people. However, circumcision in its spiritual

application is plain. The apostle says, "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have *no confidence in the flesh.*" But this is in connexion with being dead and risen with Christ, as the following part of the chapter shows; where the apostle unfolds how far "confidence in the flesh" extends, and how much it includes; and then shows how all is displaced as "dung" and "loss" by the excellency of the knowledge of a dead and risen Christ. The flesh can have nothing to do with that heavenly life into which we are introduced by Christ. It is that which attaches itself to the things of this world, and cannot rise above it; hence there is nothing left for it but that mortification, of which circumcision is the typical expression.

During the whole of their wanderings in the wilderness, the people were not circumcised. And in truth, it is not in the sorrows and trials of a life of pilgrimage, nor in its mercies either, however it may be the result of redemption,

that we get the power to put aside all that attaches us to the world. This life must be lived, it is true, and there must be faithfulness in it; but where this is the case, it leaves the traces of Egypt still upon us, and does not rise to the sphere which is proper to the heavenly life, to which redemption brings us. It is in practically entering by God's Spirit into the truth that we are dead and risen with Christ, that we get this power. In Colossians iii. 1, we have the exhortation, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," &c., founded on the statement in the previous chapter in which the true force of *circumcision* is given. "Ye are complete in him which is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein *also ye are risen with him*," &c. (Col. ii. 10—12.) "If ye then be risen with Christ," it will be seen, is in immediate

sequence with this. Moreover the following exhortation, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," &c., is founded on the statement, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." This, then, is our "Gilgal." All enjoyment of our special portion in Christ, all spiritual power to overcome our enemies, hangs on this.

But this is not all that Gilgal presented. It was there that they kept the passover, as it is said, "in the plains of Jericho." The passover, as observed in Egypt, was the symbol of deliverance from surrounding judgment, while the people eat it in haste with girded loins, ready to depart on the morrow from the land of their bondage, to which they were never again to return. Before Jericho, it was God's table prepared for His people in the presence of their enemies. It was at the same moment the commemoration of their redemption from Egypt, and of all the mercy that had resulted from it in the displays of divine power and goodness at the Red Sea, and in the forty years of the wil-

derness, and which had now planted them in Canaan. Redemption from Egypt and the rest of Canaan are brought together by it. For us, it is the heart turning back again to the cross to see the linking together by it of redemption and heavenly glory; to learn how that wondrous death of Christ which at first met us as deliverance from wrath and condemnation, is the groundwork of all those after displays of divine mercy, which are involved in being "quicken'd together with Christ, and raised up together, and made sit together in the heavenly places in Christ."

But conjoined with the passover, they "eat of the old corn of the land," and the manna, the bread of the wilderness ceases. Before a single city is taken, and the enemy apparently remaining in unbroken strength, the people are quietly enjoying the fruit of the land of Canaan. Thus Christ, when the soul is in the power of its heavenly place and portion, is fed upon in another character than that in which He was presented in His

path with us here on earth. As incarnate, "the bread which came down from heaven," the soul finds the preciousness of seeing Him, whom it is called to follow in his course of subjection and divine perfectness, as a man on earth. It is its stay and strength, amidst the trials and difficulties of the way, to see how Christ, as a man, was found in every sorrow and circumstance into which the believer can be brought in his path, in the world, of faithfulness to the Lord. But as "risen with Christ," a risen Christ in heaven becomes the necessity of the position in which we are set. He must now be fed upon in His proper character of a heavenly Christ, and in heaven; and as having brought us there too. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

In Egypt the view of Israel was bounded by the deliverance of the pass-over. At the Red Sea their horizon was enlarged; and a song of triumph was raised when from its shores they

saw the salvation of the Lord. In the wilderness they saw still further, and proved the exhaustless resources and the patient goodness of their God. But at Gilgal, when the Jordan was passed and their feet pressed the promised land, all was brought together in one grand panorama, as they "kept the passover" and "did eat of the old corn of the land." And surely it is not to dismiss the cross from our sight, or to lightly esteem the bread which came down from heaven, when we speak of being in heavenly places and feeding upon a heavenly Christ. No. It is from this point, and from this point alone, that what Christ has done for us, and the way in which he has been presented to us, can be seen in their proper elevation and their due significance.

But there is still something further which characterizes "Gilgal." The twelve stones which were taken up out of the midst of Jordan, where the priest's feet stood with the ark, were pitched in Gilgal. For the people were brought into the land and the memorial

of their passage through the Jordan was set up before their circumcision. But if their title to the land was thus made good by divine power, their enjoyment of it was inseparable from their passing through the land in self-appropriation and the ejection of their enemies by the victorious power of God. So every believer, as a divine truth, is dead and risen with Christ, through faith in Him "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." But this is a very different thing from its practical realization through the power of the Holy Ghost. The entrance of the heart in joy into the place to which the wondrous death of Christ gives us a title is inseparable from the use of that death, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the mortification of the flesh and of all that is contrary to a heavenly life. And this again cannot be dissociated from those conflicts with spiritual enemies, of which the wars of Joshua are but a type. Gilgal must be our camp, as it was Israel's, where we must "put on the

whole armour of God." God was there in all His strength against the enemies of the people. And so the apostle urges, in connexion with putting on the armour, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." And he closes the exhortation by the words, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Because prayer is the acknowledgment of dependence and weakness; but it is the direct means of bringing in the strength of God.

But that which gives Gilgal its special practical character is the circumcision of the people, by which the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. "The Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day." Circumcision took away from the people the last trace of the bondage from which they had been redeemed. They are now manifestly no longer the slaves of Egypt,

but the citizens of Canaan, bearing in their own persons the mark and seal of separation to the Lord. In like manner, that which corresponds to a heavenly position is that we put aside all that marks our character as belonging to this world. This does not consist in throwing off all natural affections, or in the negligent discharge of natural obligations, under the pretence of the heart's occupation with higher things. It is not asceticism; though it is the putting aside of the habits and tastes which connect us *morally* with the world, in order to be under the power of those objects which address themselves to the heavenly life, as risen with Christ into another sphere, where He Himself is.

Gilgal is the place of the enjoyment of accomplished redemption; of feeding upon a heavenly Christ; of the witness of the power of His death and resurrection, as bringing us into heavenly places; as well as the place of strength for spiritual conflicts. The camp of Israel was at Gilgal, to which Joshua and all the people returned after their conquests

in Canaan. So, whatever spiritual victories we may gain they will soon cease, or be exchanged for discomfiture and dismay, if there be not the constant, habitual mortification of the flesh.

The consequence of Israel's leaving Gilgal is seen ultimately in the condition of the people in the Book of Judges, where it is said, (Judges ii. 1,) "The angel of the Lord came from Gilgal to Bochim"—the place of weeping. And how surely has the humbling parallel been brought out in the history of the Church! The enjoyment of Canaan exchanged for bondage to the Canaanites! The place of victory and joy surrendered for the place of vanquishment and tears! It was not said in the history that the Lord and His strength were linked with Gilgal; but it came out too clearly when, through departure from it and unfaithfulness, His presence and sustainment were lost. And if, in application to a narrower circle, it be asked, How is it that heavenly truths have so little power, in those by whom they are professed, to produce a heavenly

life, and are so little accompanied by spiritual power and separation from the world? the reply must be, Because there is so great an estrangement from Gilgal. It is impossible to live a heavenly life, or to enjoy the heavenly portion in which grace has set us, if we neglect to "mortify our members which are on the earth." The Lord Jesus Christ has converted death into an instrument and means by which we may disengage ourselves from the claims of the flesh and all that is a hindrance to our heavenly life. As it is said, "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is thus practically that the claims of the flesh are to be met and set aside. If I am dead to sin, I shall not be living any longer in it. If I am dead to the world, the world will become dead to me. All that makes its appeal, and makes it successfully too, to one who is "living in the world, becomes powerless in regard to one who is using the death of Christ so as to reckon himself to be dead. But

this is common-place, every-day work. It makes no show, and brings no credit. The mortification of the flesh is not outward activity. Neither is it the *display* of spiritual energy. But it lies at the basis of all true spiritual strength, and is a *sine qua non* to all real service for Christ, and all possible enjoyment of our place as risen with Him.

There are two lives, if I may so speak, that the Christian is called to live by virtue of his association with Christ. There is the life of faithfulness here amidst the trying scenes and circumstances of this world, in which he is to walk as Christ also walked. In this he may be doing the same things as other men, but doing them from an entirely different motive and with an entirely different end. No doubt it is by the heavenly life that the true character is impressed upon our life of faithfulness here in the world. For the Lord Jesus was always a heavenly man in circumstances which marked His sojourn here on earth. Still this life, of which we speak, has a necessary con-

nexion with the world, and its energies are called into action by the circumstances that characterize the world. But there is another life that is specifically and essentially heavenly. This life owes nothing to this world. Its source and origin is heavenly. Its springs of enjoyment, its resources and objects, its sphere and final end are all heavenly. There is nothing of this world that enters into this life. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Now there are a thousand things that the heart may get entangled with, which are not exactly the evil lusts of the flesh, which, if they do not outwardly mar the faithfulness of our walk in the world, do entirely prevent the realization of that heavenly life to which we are raised, and in the sphere of which we are set by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If then we have so by the power of the Spirit passed through death as to have our life in heaven, with the Jordan as our frontier and Canaan as our home, let us not forget that our conflicts must

be there too. Gilgal was Israel's camp; but while circumcision stamped its name upon it, and gave it significance, there were grouped around it the stones of memorial out of the midst of Jordan; the keeping of the passover in the plains of Jericho; the eating of the old corn of the land; and the wondrous presence of "the captain of the host of the Lord."



THE PRACTICAL POWER OF FAITH.

(Hebrews xi.)

"We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe [are of faith] to the saving of the soul." This is the brief and emphatic conclusion to the exhortations and warnings presented in the 10th chapter of this epistle. It is also the basis and groundwork of all that is unfolded, concerning the action and illustration and triumphs of faith, in the well-known chapter that follows. The peculiar force and pregnancy of the

expression, "We are of faith," is the starting-point for the exhibition of the whole wondrous array of the examples of its power which this chapter is occupied in producing.

Such a confirmation as this was especially needed by the Hebrews, disposed as they naturally were to attach undue and unwonted importance to outward and sensuous things. The natural mind universally is especially open to such appeals; but the Hebrews were surrounded by innumerable temptations to turn back again to these outward distinctions, and to be occupied again with the importance of ordinances and ritual observances, &c., which for a time had been displaced by the power of faith. But this power was now evidently on the decline. How seldom is it found in its true vigour! However, if faith be swerved from, which is the essential position of the gospel, the apostle shows that not only is the ground of Christianity surrendered, but the very characteristic distinction of all those who in every age have been acknowledged of God

is surrendered too. For he adds, "By it [that is, by its possession] the elders obtained a good report"—were attested or borne witness of.

In the first living example of its power, which he adduces, he shows that, after sin had entered into the world, the only possible link of man's connexion with God and ground of righteousness is that which faith supplies. In the subsequent examples, he as clearly lays open that the path of faith is the only possible pathway for the people of God through a world of evil, and is the only solution of its difficulties.

How faith is wrought in the soul is not the purpose of the apostle here to show. This may be learned from other sources, where we are taught that it is by the power of God's Spirit through the reception of the divine word. Here the distinctive points which are most strongly insisted on are its absolute necessity and its operative power.

The first verse of the chapter has been considered by some as presenting a

logical definition of faith; but this is hardly so. It is rather a description of its power and province—the way in which it acts in those by whom it is possessed. The definition of faith is given in the passage, “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” It expresses its nature—that which makes it what it is. There may be every possible variety in the action and energy of faith, but it is this which constitutes its essence; and nothing can be more practically important than that this should be clearly established in the mind. Because it is that which alone gives the word of God its due importance, by linking God Himself with the word.

In general statement, the first thing that is presented in the chapter is the action of faith in regard to future and unseen things: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It gives to the discoveries of revelation, on which hope is based, an apprehended reality, a fundamental existence to the soul, which

leads to the patient waiting for the things promised, and an unswerving expectation of their accomplishment. The apostle (Rom. viii. 24, 25) taking notice of hope as regarding that which is unseen and future, says, "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

It would, I fear, startle some Christians, to be told that they were "saved by hope;" conscious as they would be, how little hope was an element in their salvation. But how much do we all need the effect of that prayer of the apostle, "Now the God of *hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may *abound in hope* through the power of the Holy Ghost."

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is the demonstration or absolute conviction of their existence and character—their substantiation and embodiment to the mind within. So that

it may be said not alone with reference to the scope and purpose of the heart swayed by the power of faith, but with regard to the perceptive faculty, "*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*"

The province of faith in regard to unseen things having been thus presented, it is next declared that creation comes within the scope of its cognizance. Not creation in its order and arrangement and vast extent—this the eye of man can contemplate, and science be occupied in unravelling. But creation as to its *origination*, which was the great puzzle of antiquity, and furnished a field of speculation where philosophic wisdom wandered, "in endless mazes lost," can alone be apprehended by the power of faith. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The simple record of the first chapter of Genesis, we are thus told, is a record that can alone be scanned by the eye of faith. To unbelief it is a

legend of impossibilities. To science it is an insoluble enigma; though it is ever busy in investigating the footprints of time, and attempting thus to invalidate what it cannot comprehend; or to declare that the simple statements of this record must be taken only in a mythic sense. To faith it is the lifting of the curtain of primeval ages to disclose the working and the majestic power of God. I repeat the declaration: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God [who "spake, and it was done,"] so that things which are seen are not made of things which do appear." So simply is the question about the eternity of matter set at rest! With so strong a hand are all the theogonies, whether ancient or modern, set aside! When I read the declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," if I reason, I of necessity disbelieve; because reason cannot reach up to the being and the power of God. Faith alone discerns that "God is." But then the difficulty vanishes; because I have God acting, and God revealing His acts.

I learn, then, "through faith," that the order and vastness and glory of creation are the effect of the powerful word of God. I learn, too, that the materials of this universe—its "elements," as they were wont, learnedly or ignorantly, to be called—received their being from God. Creation is not the mere impress of His hand to give order and beauty to a chaos that existed without His will and independently of His word. If untold ages had already run their course when that condition of matter was reached which is described by the earth being "without form and void," it only shows that the mind must travel back through the void of these untold ages until it reaches—"THE BEGINNING." Because "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

To most who may be expected to read these thoughts, perhaps, it will be matter of surprise that so much has been said about faith as the clue by which alone the mind can be guided through

the mystery of creation. Because simple minds formed by a habit of deference to the divine word may think that they scarcely find in it a mystery at all. That is because the secret is out. And the light of the divine word meeting with faith, the road is travelled with a confidence that never raises a question. But oh! if this clue were once withdrawn, not all the wisdom of man in all ages would be sufficient to guide a single soul through the hopeless labyrinth! Such is our indebtedness, even as to a knowledge of creation, to the inestimable word of God!

Faith is next presented as having to do with man's moral condition, and is seen to shed its light upon the question of righteousness before God. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh."

Adam is passed by in the series of these examples, and is only presented in the divine word as "the figure of him

that was to come." But this omission must not be construed into a proof of his continued or final alienation from God. By his act sin had entered into the world, and death and judgment became man's doom, and another is fitly presented as the example of righteousness brought in through sacrifice and grace, and the exercise of a faith which looked to God according to the light of the revelation He had made.

The details of the history, it is admitted, are brief and few; and the measure is not stated of the light possessed. But the elements of a judgment are strong and clear; and a special interest attaches to this first man standing forth on the dark background of sin, and condemnation, and death, and finding acceptance and an attestation by God that he was righteous. The exercises of his soul as a worshipper are not given; nor are the throes of conscience through which he might have passed, unfolded; but his faith is declared.

All that we see in the history is a man standing in the consciousness of the

ruin and separation from God that has been produced by sin—himself and his parents, exiled from Paradise, the home of innocence, now the denizens of the earth that has been cursed with barrenness on man's account. The bread which he eats in the sweat of his face is the witness to him of his mortality; and he acknowledges that death is the righteous sentence of the judgment of God. He brings a lamb for a sacrifice—"of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof"—he sheds the blood of his victim, and places death between himself and God. It is the expression of the faith he had as to his own condition, and the desert of sin before God, and of the way of deliverance from it: and we are told that he was thus accepted. "He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Doubtless it was the faith of the offerer that stamped the sacrifice of Abel as more excellent than that of Cain. But there is more than this in it. In the selection of the offering there was declared the heart's submission to the solemn dis-

covery made concerning sin by the revelation of God. In Cain's offering there was not only the witness of the absence of faith in him who brought it, but the rejection of the light of revelation which alone adequately disclosed man's ruin and God's way of deliverance. "Abel obtained witness that he was righteous;" but *God testified of his gifts*. So through Christ we have the personal attestation that we are righteous—"justified from all things"—"made the righteousness of God." But this righteousness takes its character entirely from the worth and excellency of Christ's offering Himself to God. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

In moral character, we know from Scripture that Abel was the opposite of Cain; and on this ground his presence became insupportable to him. As it is said, "Cain was of that wicked one and slew his brother, because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." None who are not strangers to

the truth will question the energetic power of faith in transforming the character; but prior to this the question to be answered is, "How shall man be just with God?" And blessed, infinitely blessed, is it to read the inspired statement, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

(To be continued.)

FRAGMENT.

1 Cor. xi.

There is something deeply affecting in the plea which our Master put before us, in connexion with this supper, in the appeal He makes to us—to do it "in remembrance of Him." It is a commemorative act; an act showing that our hearts have *personal affection to Himself*. "This do in remembrance of *me*." I am sure our souls feel the poverty of doctrine, in comparison of truth, as we

get it in connexion with the *person* of *Jesus*. The sweetest part is, "Do it in remembrance of *me*." That you and I should be in the wilderness to remember *Jesus*—to sympathize with Him in His death and sufferings! This is the place in which we stand in connexion with Him. That He can look on us poor saved ones—sinners that we are, though saved ones—and say to His Father, There are a few gathered in my name remembering *me*! And that is joy to Him, to the heart of the Lord, and a refreshment to Him. And He can thus joy in our joy at the remembrance of what He has done for us. It is bearing affection to Him, personal remembrance to Him is the sweet thought and assurance—not mere doctrinal knowledge. Very often we find much personal love to the Lord, when there is very little clear understanding of truth. We could not do it intelligently, without seeing the love of Christ.

A SERIES.

No. 8.

OUR POSITION AND CALLING.

I have endeavoured, in preceding numbers of this series, to trace our translation from a condition of death in sin to one of life and of nearness to God in Christ. I now desire to examine and set forth the nature of the place and position to which we have been translated, by which terms I mean the material sphere appointed us of God, by which our position is characterized. At one time Canaan was the appointed place for God's people, and their position there was necessarily earthly, the temple in Jerusalem being the centre of service and worship. No one would assert that Jerusalem in Palestine or the site of the temple was the centre of service and worship *now*; but many who are forced to acknowledge the fact of the former place being done away with are very inapprehensive as to what has been given instead; in a word, as to where the place of the saints is *now*. This is a most

important question ; for a peculiar position once given to the saints of God being lost, unless I can determine definitely the place appointed for them now, I cannot arrive at the nature and character of their position. To this great question then I reply in a word, that the place of the saints now is not earth, but heaven ; and consequently abounding on all sides with contrasts to the former one, or Canaan. Nay, so peculiar and distinct is this new and heavenly place from the former or earthly, that if it be not known in itself and preserved inviolate from intermixture with the other and its arrangements, the power and blessing of it will be lost ; and if the principle of it be not established in practice, no conception of it, even if it be a true one, can be abiding. Hence, not only the great importance of a correct apprehension of this subject for our individual blessing, but we shall find that it is because of ignorance of it, that there are such dark and confused notions, as well as such a low order of walk among the saints now.

When there are two places, one earthly and visible, the other heavenly and invisible, the one known and acted before men, and within the grasp of the natural mind, the other spiritual and unintelligible, unless to the spiritual, and only to be grasped by faith, it is easy to understand how even the Christian may descend from the spiritual to the natural, and then be reduced to make out a system owning something of the former, but mainly clinging to the latter. Such an intermixture is a mongrel, each element spoiled and diverted from its true meaning; and once the teachers in the Church had fallen into this error, misapprehension and misappropriation of the earthly for the heavenly standing was systematically established.

Unless we see how the earthly has been superseded, not only as to site and centre, but as to the whole system and position, and also the divine purpose in thus setting it aside, we shall never confine ourselves to the heavenly, or retain that apprehension of it which would place us above confusion or misapplica-

tion with respect to the other. While to the Old-Testament saints there was revealed a heavenly glory, destined for the earth, their hopes were never detached from earth. Mount Zion, or the city of God, was to them the climax. The Lord had chosen Zion, and although the hopes of the faithful doubtless stretched beyond the Zion of their own day to the far more perfect and glorious manifestation of it yet to come, still it was so truly the spot chosen of God that until it was set aside, and that only for a time, there could be no disclosure of any new point of centralization for the saints. Thus even the beginning of the New Testament opens no new place to us. The Lord Jesus came unto His *own*; and, if St. Luke's Gospel be carefully studied, it will be seen that every offer was made to Israel, and that in their own land, before any decided rejection of them was adopted. The Lord's being personally rejected was not even enough in God's mercy to demand their cutting off; for what brought their guilt to the unpardonable point was the citizens "sending

a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us;" and this was done at the death of Stephen. It will be remarked that in all Peter's sermons before that event, he speaks of the Lord's return, and the times of refreshing from His actual presence, intimating that He was ready to return to the land with His heavenly glory, as Enoch foresaw His coming; and Jesus as still "*standing*" was revealed to Stephen before his death. The rejection of Christ being now consummated openly and avowedly by the Jews in Jerusalem, wrath had come on them to the uttermost, and the Lord forsook His own inheritance and abhorred it. The husbandmen had killed the only Son, and now the vineyard must be taken from them. But is the same vineyard given to the saints now? Certainly not. Hence the revelation to Peter when God would open the door of mercy to the Gentiles. Clean and unclean beasts are presented together in one sphere. The sphere was certainly not earthly, for the sheet came from

heaven and was received again into heaven. I adduce this to show that there must be some sphere where Jew and Gentile could meet on common ground, which could not have been in Palestine, the earthly vineyard, unless through circumcision or keeping of the law. Immediately following the revelation to Peter, Paul is called and introduced at once into heavenly glory, from *whence* Christ identifies Himself with His people on earth; and *of this* Paul is sent "to be a minister and a witness." Hence what was committed to him is called the gospel of the glory of Christ.

But Paul, too, lingers over Jerusalem, and all beautiful was this in him in its way, and in keeping with the long-suffering grace of God; therefore he does not distinctly reveal the new place of the saints until he is shut up in the prison at Rome, having appealed to the emperor, the ruling head of the fourth power, for a justice denied him from his own nation—the Jews.

It is in the Epistle to the Ephesians that the apostle first distinctly details

the nature and consequences of this new place. He had been introduced to it years before, when caught up, as he says, into the third heaven; (2 Cor. xii.); but he does not unfold the knowledge of the mystery of it until he writes to the Ephesians from the prison in Rome. The epistle opens with spiritual blessings in heavenly places; and then the apostle presents to us how Christ has been "raised up and made to sit down at God's own right hand in heavenly places, 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, mark! it is to us-ward who believe, the self-same power by which Christ has been raised up. Just as the good Samaritan set the recovering sufferer on his own beast, so is each believer now wrought on by the self-same power of the Holy Ghost as that which raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at God's right hand in heavenly places. Consequently, inasmuch as the same power works in us as worked in Christ,

the head, so are we brought into experience by faith of the exaltation of the Head, and that in the sphere to which He has been exalted.

It is not so much because we have the life of Christ, as because He is our Head, and in virtue of our peculiar relationship to Him; but of this more another time. The truth is simply this:—Christ our Head is raised to a certain place, and the power which exalted Him to that place has wrought in us, His members, to set us there also. Wherefore it is said, “You hath he quickened and raised up, and made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places.” Christ being rejected, and earth—as the place of His home—being for the time given up, He has found a place in the heavens; and that place being *His*, is *ours* also. Therefore He said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” The fact of His being there was the preparation of the place for us. We must bear in mind that Christ, being rejected on earth, was called of the Father to sit down on His throne; and that when subsequently the

testimony of the Holy Ghost was rejected, the nation and territory of Israel was given up according to the Lord's words, in Matthew xxiv.; and hence, after the death of Stephen, the door of mercy is opened to the Gentiles, and Antioch (where the disciples are first, by divine direction, called Christians) supersedes Jerusalem.

The rejection of the Lord being now complete, the earthly house "left desolate," (Matt. xxiii. 38,) and the natural branches of the olive-tree broken off, (Rom. xi. 17,) He appears in the glory to Paul, and sends him to preach—what? The blessings of the land? Not at all; but "to be a minister and a witness *both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.*" (Acts xxvi. 16.) He was to preach, not the "gospel of the kingdom," but the gospel of glory, that glory in which he had seen the Lord, now rejected from the earth; and the things which were subsequently revealed to him when he was introduced into the third heaven. Thus, all hope

for Jerusalem being annulled, Paul, the minister and witness of these things, unfolds in the Epistle to the Ephesians, how that Christ has been raised up and made sit down at God's right hand in heavenly places as head of His body—the Church; and this position of Christ our Head must necessarily, because of our relation to Him, describe our position. Consequently the apostle proceeds with that declaration, "You that were dead in sins hath he quickened and raised up, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ." This is the place now provided and prepared for the saints. And, as it is clear to any sound mind, that the position which had its centre in the Holy Land is annulled, we cannot know that we have any position at all, and shall be liable to all kinds of spiritual vagaries, unless we hear the apostle Paul, and understand the revelation made known unto him, and through him unto us, as to what *we* (i. e., the saints of the present dispensation) are called to *now*. It would carry me beyond the limits of this paper to show how the

earth as a whole was under judgment, so that no other part of it could be substituted for the land of Israel; but if we once admit that the people of that land, once chosen of God for His peculiar inheritance, had so deliberately rejected the Heir that they had been cast off, and therefore the distinct place with which God had for ages connected His words been superseded, we are forced to come to the conclusion, either that the heavenlies are now our place, or that we have no distinct place at all.

I have dwelt on how the apostle connects the saints with their Head, and, as a necessary consequence, establishes them with Him where He is. But there is also another side of this question as to our place and position, which it is equally blessed for us to consider. It is how the affections of Christ's heart, apart from any doctrinal outline or precept, ranges and fills the heavenly limits described for us by the apostle. He says, when about to leave His disciples, "In my Father's house are many abodes, if it were not so I would have told you. I

go to prepare a place for you." Now I cite this passage and expression of our Lord, not to deduce therefrom the doctrine of our place, but to show how His *heart* reached out to a place in the heavens for us; and that His going there, so far from being a moment of distance, or forgetfulness, was, on the contrary, the very event which assured our occupation of that place also; and in this sense it was a preparation for us. In other words, this affection of His heart thus declared corroborates the doctrine and finds scope for itself fully when we see the doctrine, which it could only do in a very limited way if the heavenly places were not revealed. Again, the Lord says, in John xvii., "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified;" now, unless there were some place above and beyond the world where He could associate us with Himself, how could this intention and desire of His heart possibly be realized? Thus, although these breathings of Christ's heart as to His desires, intentions, and purposes for us, are by no

means to be regarded as points of doctrine, still it is most blessed to see how all the doctrine enunciated by the Apostle Paul suits and fits in to them, so to speak, in true consistency. Nay, more; that the one explains and substantiates the other, so that if we do not hear the apostle, the utterances of Christ's heart will be very meaningless to us. Again. St. Paul writes, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Here it is distinctly stated *where* our citizenship is, and that not as a future but as a present thing; so positively present that we are to be considered as not merely looking for heaven, or expecting to go there after death, as is too much the limits of the faith of Christians of this day, but as by faith there *already*; and as there looking for an additional blessing—even that our Lord should come from that region in which we are by faith with Him now, and "change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, by the power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

If we bear in mind that our Lord, as Head of a new creation, has sat down at God's right hand in the heavenly places, He being the pledge and root according to the mind of the Father, of the full development of all this creation in heaven and earth, that we are attached to Him by the Spirit as members of His body, His flesh, and of His bones; so that all distinction between Jew and Gentile is lost, nay, that the Jew is on as new a ground as the Gentile, so that if the newness has admitted the Gentile with the Jew, it is a gain to the Jew to be received in common with the Gentile; for "through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father;" if, I repeat, we bear in mind all this, and how we are united to Him by the one Spirit in heaven, we can readily understand that we stand together in the self-same Spirit *down here*. If our position is that of being seated together with Christ in heaven, as members through the Holy Ghost with the Head, we are, on account of this, baptized by one Spirit into one body, and continue in this spiritual unity

down here. But this spiritual unity can never be understood unless our position with Him in *heaven* is seen and apprehended. Nothing can have a more practical effect on us than a true knowledge of our position; for if my position as a saint now is a heavenly one, the first deduction from this is, that earth as it now is is not my place; and the fact of heaven being accepted as my place instead of earth will very seriously affect me in all my ways on earth; and my own soul's relation to God must be very distinct and close, in comparison to what it would be if my position were an earthly one. Let us consider for a little more closely, how a heavenly position affects my walk on earth.

The earth, we have seen, and ultimately the land, was the sphere where God purposed to shed His blessings on man, which all the faithful looked for, even after power had passed from Israel to the Gentiles; for when Israel had failed, the power which God had entrusted to them passed over to Nebuchadnezzar. Now Daniel, a faithful one, did not, even

though a captive in Babylon, surrender his earthly hopes. Nay, while marking his separation in food from the unclean Gentile, he accepts and uses all the power and honour of the world conferred on him. Was he wrong? Not at all. Why? Because he had nothing but an earthly place. Whereas if his place had been a heavenly one, he would plainly have been inconsistent, for he was expressly connecting himself with the power on earth as one of its citizens, which truly he felt he was, and sighed for the day when he should be restored to Jerusalem. Whatever a man's place may be, the better the man is, the more must he desire to improve it; nay, the more truly elevated and refined he is, the more will he seek to conform all in his place and sphere with which he has to do into the same order of taste and excellence; and on the same principle, the more righteous a man is, the more he will seek the regeneration and improvement of the earth, unless he knows that it is no longer his place or sphere, and that it cannot, until it is purged,

be the scene of divine blessing as it once was. Here it is where so many true Christians and righteous souls of the present day are deceived and misled. They feel the world's ruin, and while tasting in their own souls the joy of God in the beauties of holiness, they think that earth must be their place till their death, and that *then* they will get heaven: a very subtle delusion of Satan. For if I do not get heaven until I die, I must of course have earth; and if earth be my place, I must act in reference to it. And it is with this feeling that Christians set themselves to improve the earth as much as they can with that class of improvements which suit earth, and are thus so far earthly-minded in their notions and purposes. They would probably adduce Daniel as an example of a godly man accepting and using the power of the world to serve his cause. Now a heavenly man walking on the earth would only offer to earth for its improvement what would suit heaven and lead to it, and his influence would be according to the order

of his own elevation. You may tell the intrinsic nature of the mind of any one by the effect it produces, for the effect will always be in correspondence with its own moral power. Thus the very best man whose place is earthly, even though it be only for the present, cannot in moral influence go beyond what would be the best thing *for* earth, while the heavenly man influences for heaven, and nothing short of that.

If then the believer's position be in heaven, as I have endeavoured to prove, and he has not learned it, how sad and disproportionate to the mind of God must all his best labours and intentions be, and how baulked and hindered must he be in comprehending the responsibilities of a calling of which he is grossly ignorant; for it is not only that he does not follow the right one, but he is pursuing the wrong one as if it were the right. I suppose nothing could be more ludicrous, if not profane, (worse than Israel calling on Baal) than to define in words the anomalous position of many saints now. They must have some

place: they cannot have two places at the same time. They do not expect heaven until after death; therefore they have a sort of tenant-at-will position on earth and are without any positive place given to them yet. A very unhappy state this, and one in which they cannot understand the Epistle to the Ephesians, nor the use to themselves of the revelation made to Paul when caught up into the third heaven, which was, I believe, in order that he, as a servant, might introduce us into the place prepared for us by our Lord, who as Host is there to receive us *now* by *faith*, as He will *hereafter* receive us there to Himself *personally* and for ever.

Thus briefly have we seen that if we do not know our position there must be eccentricity in all our course; however good may be our intentions, our strength will be misdirected and our testimony unprofitable. What then is the other side of the question? How will the knowledge of our position affect our souls? I have already observed how the heart of Christ claims to have us by

faith with Him in His own place, as the only refuge for the troubled heart, and the only effectual sanctification from this evil world. If then His love and purpose claim this, how can I respond to the claim or enjoy the fruition of it if my position does not tally with this claim of His heart? Impossible! I can never know it unless I reach the spot where the claim is satisfied; and Christ's love is not satisfied either as to my heart or personal walk, unless I am by faith in the place where He is; and therefore if I am not, I cannot know the blessing of responding to His love, because I have not reached the spot where it is satisfied, and to which it has extended with regard to me. But there is another thing: If I have no place outside of the world or this earth, which is the theatre of Satan's power, for he is the "prince of the power of the air," I must at best—because in the enemy's camp—be always apprehensive of danger, without ever enjoying the blissful serenity of peace. True, I may expect that the God of peace shall bruise Satan

under my feet shortly; but still, if I have no place but the sphere in which Satan is dominant, however I may feel acquitted from sin before God, I can never feel in the joy of complete supremacy over Satan. I may expect to get across the Red Sea, and to escape from the hand of Pharaoh, but I cannot in known triumph sing the song of Moses; and if not, how can I the song of the Lamb?

But mark the contrast! If I have a place now in heaven with Christ my Head, when I realize my position there, I am *above*, and not merely *preserved from*, all the power of Satan; for then, through faith, I am conscious of being raised "far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come." In a word, I range in full supremacy with Christ over everything, entering undisturbedly into the fruition of His love; so completely and entirely have I in spirit escaped from Satan's assaults when I have thus ascertained my true place.

It is true, that all his efforts and energy are brought to bear on my soul, seeking to enter into and to possess this land of rest. The seven nations of Canaan in their opposition to the possession of the land by the children of Israel, were as nothing in comparison to the relentless, violent, and unceasing efforts of the wicked spirits in heavenly places to deprive the saint now of the possession of his place there. And the reason of this opposition is very simple; for there alone can the soul enter into (though still in the body) the extent of the love and service of Christ, and at the same time feel itself in unclouded brightness, above and beyond all the power and assaults of Satan.

The Lord give us grace earnestly to study our position; for in proportion as we know it by faith shall we "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called."

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chap. i. 1—5. These verses are abstract—not history. In verse 5 we have a very singular statement. The light shines in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. Now, naturally, light cannot shine without putting aside the darkness. The light thus shining then is a very out-of-the-way, non-natural thing. As light, it is an immensely deep truth, that while God is light Himself, yet when we look upon it as it is here revealed in the world, it is *for men*. In the Greek the last clause of verse 4 is a reciprocal proposition. “The life was the *light of men*.” It is not for angels, but for men. God is revealed in a way especially suited to man. It is mercy, grace, patience, &c., with which angels have nothing to do. Here then we see God revealed as the light of men and no one else. Abstract godhead is light for every one and everything. Here it is God revealed as the light of men, and after Him as thus revealed

even angels have to search. "Seen of angels." If they want to learn what God is in the character of life and light, they must learn what Christ was upon earth.

"In Him was life." This was His nature. There never was a created being of which we can say, "in him was life." We have no life in ourselves. As believers, Christ is our life. Life is *in* Him—ours is derivative, being from Him. Because He lives, we shall live also.

This life is distinct from the Holy Ghost, which Christ Himself did not get officially until He was baptized, and so life and the Holy Ghost are separate things to the believer. This is seen in the difference between the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Colossians. In the former there is not merely life, but the Holy Ghost sent down as earnest of the inheritance and the power of service; while in Colossians, where life itself in connexion with the Head is the subject, we do not get the Holy Ghost once mentioned, but simply the new man.

Verse 9 simply means that Christ being here, the light was not for Jews merely, but for every man—the world. Not that every man would positively see it—we know they did not—but it came for them, with an aspect towards all.

In the first part of this chapter we get what is before Genesis. When Genesis begins we have the word already, for in the beginning the Word *was*. The divinity and personality of the Word are very carefully spread out. In the beginning *was* the Word—when everything began *it was*; for it did not begin—it had not beginning. Then “the Word was with God.” There I get, as far as our ideas and language go, personality—“the Word was God.” There I get divinity. In verse 2 we get another thing, which the Fathers, as they are termed, did not understand, but were quite wrong as to it; namely, eternal personality. As to the term *personality*, I do not think much of it; but I know of no better. Human language is defective here.

The force of the term "Word" is that which expresses God's mind. Christ was the only living expression of truth as it is in God. The Word was the expression of God, but it is not language, but a person. The Greek word *λογος* does not mean merely *Word*, but the thought also. Word, thought, and expression of thought are all indicated in Greek by the term *λογος*.

Image and likeness. The term *image* does not express so much as likeness. Image carries with it more the idea of representative—as the image of Jupiter, which is more that which is representative of him—not his likeness. Whereas likeness may not be representative of a person, but conveys to us the idea of what the original is like. Man stood in Eden both as the image and likeness of God. He was the centre of a system—in this sense representing God—for all creation centred up in Adam. Man was the image of God, not of the Word as such, although he is a type of the latter.

In this chapter we get first what the

Word is in His nature and person; (ver. 1, 2;) then we get Him as Creator, (ver. 3,) where we see Him as the maker of everything in the most absolute way.

The anti-nicene fathers were not at all orthodox. Heathen philosophy got amongst them. They were really the corrupters of the simplicity which was in Christ. Their notion was, that the Word only came out to be a person at the creation. Justin Martyr even said, that it was impossible that God should become a man. This was the result of an attempt of man to philosophise on the nature of God, to explain which is impossible.

Verse 4. *In Him was life.* That is, in its very nature life was *in Him*. We have life as given to us by God, but *in Him* was life, and this was the light of men. This light is not the light which Paul says, in 1 Tim., "No man can approach unto." This was abstract Godhead—which is and must necessarily remain inaccessible light. But in the Word, the light is seen as the light of men—light shining out for men. It shines out *to*

sinner, and, if they receive it, also *in* them. Believers ought to exhibit it. In 1 Tim. vi. 16, the light spoken of is quite inaccessible (*ἀπρόσιτον*). It is such that not only no man, but no being, (see Greek) can approach unto. This is quite different from what we have in John i. 4. In the first part of the verse in Timothy the word man is left out. It really means "no being." It is unrevealed divine light—what God is in Himself in the abstract. In the second part of this verse, "man" does come in; but the apostle is simply confirming and applying his statement; bringing it home, as it is called.

Now this light which has come out, which is revealed, the WORD, is for man; it is not adapted to angels, although they, no doubt, may see it, but it is for, fitted to, and takes its character from man. Grace, mercy, patience, love, is its character. Showing God to be connected with man in a way in which He could not be in connexion with angels. This gives man a wonderful place among the creatures of God.

These first five verses in John i. have a kind of covering character to the whole gospel. Up to the end of the eighth chapter, we find the light manifested, but men unable to use it. In chapter ix. we find Christ giving eyes in order that the light may be seen. Before this the light does not shine so as to dispel the darkness. Power is needed to work upon man and not merely light. We see here the moral effect of the light as revealed among men. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all: there could not be darkness where He was, but there might be blindness: so here, the darkness comprehended it not. In chapter ix. we find Christ giving eyes to see the light; without this all was of no use. It is a most remarkable fact to see this light shining and the darkness comprehending it not.

Verse 6. It is very noticeable here, how that verse 5 drops from abstract statement into history. "The light shineth" but the "darkness *comprehended* it not." Hence we get in verse 6 history commenced. God not only sends light

but sends a witness to bear testimony to the Light. Here we get the activity of God's goodness still dealing with the responsibility of man, supposing, of course, grace to make it effectual. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came to bear witness," &c. Verse 9 should be read, according to the best Greek authorities—"That was the true Light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man."

It is a remarkable witness of the great grace of God, that He sent not only the true Light, but a witness to the Light—a witness, as it were, that the sun was shining; not only putting it there to shine, but sent to tell us to look at it. This shows us God's grace and the hardness of man's heart. At the creation, the light that shone needed not a witness to it. It was there, and man saw it; but then *man* was good.

In verse 10 we find that the world would not have Him. Although the world was made by Him, yet it knew Him not. Hence we get an entirely new thing brought in. "To as many

as received Him, to them *gave He power* to become sons of God," &c. Here I see how I get the power. Through receiving Christ I get life-giving power. It is not in myself at all. John is very absolute in his statements, because he deals with the truth itself. Hence we get absolute Calvinism, or rather absolute *grace*. Now here man is nothing at all—has nothing to do with it. Man may receive the Word—believe it—but *Christ* gives life. It is a *gift*. When we get to the root of the matter God is seen in action, and man is nothing. Still there is man's responsibility. Outwardly, as to man, it is either a good will or a bad will, but secretly and really the life comes from God. We here get another thing—life by receiving the *Word*: hence it is we are sons. Before Christ was revealed there might be life, but there could not be sonship. This was only brought out when the Son came into the world and was received. The expression, "power to become," is a bad translation: it should be, "right or title to be sons of God."

This verse also goes outside the Jews: it embraces all that believe. Those who are here made sons are so in contrast with the fleshly relationship which was found in the Jew. This gospel generally set things in contrast with Judaism, as may be seen in almost every chapter.

We get in this gospel no allusion to Pentecost amongst the Jewish feasts that are alluded to, because Christ here always gives us things upon earth. The pass-over was on earth, and He will be on earth at the feast of tabernacles. Christ was in heaven at Pentecost.

“Believe on his name.” His name expresses what He really is. To us that name is “*Jesus*,” which is not an official name, but a personal one. It is by this name we are saved. In the Gospels “Christ” is always an appellation—“*the Christ*.” It became eventually a personal name and is so used frequently in the Epistles of the New Testament.

(To be continued.)

ERRATUM.

Page 217, of last No., for “theogonies,” read cosmogonies.

A SERIES.

No. 9.

THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST.

If we do not understand our position as saints with Christ in heaven now, we can never understand the Church as to its constitution down here, or the nature of our membership with it. I therefore proceed with the consideration of this interesting subject; premising to my readers that I take it for granted that they understand their position and calling with Christ in heaven, as I have endeavoured to set it forth in the preceding numbers of this series.

The Church is peculiar to the New Testament. However the people of God may have been united under one government or viewed as a body politic; yet, as a "*church*," according to the force and meaning of that word, they never were. True, the word "*church*" is used by Stephen when speaking of the children of Israel in the wilderness; (Acts vii. 38;) but I suppose that no one will as-

sert that the chosen or elected "assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spake to him in Mount Sinai," bears any resemblance to that "assembly" which the Lord announces in Matthew xvi. 18, that He will build on Himself. "On this rock will I build my church." Before I comment on this remarkable passage, just let me say that an assembly, or a selected congregation, as the word *ἐκκλησία* expresses, is always characterized by the nature of the power or person used in congregating together the component parts. An ecclesia must always be formed by some leading principle—some influence acting on the parts and inducing them to form in company.

The subject to which I desire to confine my attention in this paper is the Church, as comprising the body of Christ. To the wider signification of the house of God, which is popularly called the professing church, I do not here allude. And if we keep simply before our minds the body of Christ, we must see that the "assembly" which

forms it necessarily could not exist before He was manifested. He is said to be now *Head* to this "assembly" which is His body; and this plainly teaches that the assembly now formed and known as His body must be subsequent to His own manifestation in flesh; i. e., He must have appeared in a body before it could be said that He was Head of a mystical body, called also an assembly or church. And not only must He have been manifested in flesh, but He must have died and risen ere that body could be set in resurrection-life with Him. He, as risen to the right hand of God, is now Head of the assembly which is His body, and therefore this assembly must, I repeat, have been formed subsequent to His ascension, in order to occupy the relation of body to Him who is the ascended Head to it. If this be not admitted, we shall be involved in endless confusion about the Church, simply because we shall mistake the origin and relations of it. If I attempt to comprise all the saints, from the beginning downwards, in the Church,

I shall in the attempt be driven to say, not only that Christ's body existed before His own manifestation, but that it was founded, and as an "assembly" gathered, on a principle and by an agency wholly different to what it is. For it must be admitted how different was the principle on which was gathered the assembly in the wilderness, and that which is composed of the saints since Christ's resurrection. And we have seen that every assembly is determined by the principle and agency through which it is formed. The saints before Christ's manifestation live by Him, and will for ever rejoice in His presence, being raised by Him to enjoy heavenly glory; but to include them in the Church, His body, is impossible. For to be in any such relationship, He must have been in heaven as the ascended one first, and the Holy Ghost down here on earth attaching the members of His body to Him the Head in heaven, which beyond all controversy could not, and did not, occur until after our Lord's ascension. For then only, as we read in John vii. 39 was the Spirit

given as consequent on His ascension and glorification. I may be told that many saints now, who are indisputably gathered as of this body, know nothing of it, and therefore that ignorance of any one's destined place is no argument that he could not be set in such a place. This is true. Ignorance does not debar me from what I am entitled to by the purpose of God, and therefore no amount of knowledge in any saint before the resurrection of Christ could alter his position as to the point we are discussing, or make that a fact which was not a fact until after the Lord's resurrection; nor could the Spirit of God put any soul into the relation of member to Christ before Christ had by His own act warranted it.

I have already referred to our Lord's words to His disciples when on earth, wherein He notified that the building of His Church was still future, and that it was to be built on Himself as the rock against which the gates of Hades should not prevail, thus distinctly implying, with reference to this new body about

to be formed, that the judgment of death (as I understand the gates of hell,) should not prevail against it; and it is evident that this could not have been verified until after His resurrection. Now this is the first time in Scripture in which mention is made of the church of this dispensation, and when any idea is for the first time suggested to us in the word, it is important that we cease not to refer to it, but study it from *thence*, and import the elements of it into every other passage which anywhere may be found to relate to the same idea and subject. The fact is that we often apply the word "Church" and give it a meaning which we have gathered more from indistinct allusions or types than from the first direct record about it. Types there may be, and are, but I must not identify them with the fact which they typify. For instance, I may say that the family of Bethany typified the Church; but I have no warrant for calling it the Church, which I find, by the Lord's own words, that He could not build until after His resurrection. And hence,

though it was from Bethany He parted at His ascension, I must follow the course of the Spirit, which descended when He ascended, or I shall not see how the Church was set up.

In a previous paper I have shown that the Church is heavenly; but before this was revealed, the people of God, the apostles even, looked for an earthly hope; for the latter said to our Lord, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"—plainly intimating that they did not expect a heavenly home with Christ: and if they had, where were all the promises to Israel? For it was necessary that every such promise should be first offered, before Israel and the land were finally abandoned. Consequently, we find that the apostles were told to await in *Jerusalem* the promise of the Father; and after the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, when they testified of "the latter rain," spoken of by Joel the prophet, it was of no heavenly position they spake, but of the fact that Christ, according to the prophecies of David,

was to sit on David's throne. Surely in these discourses there was nothing to lead the saints beyond an earthly hope and a Messianic glory. And still more so in Acts iii., where Peter connects their full blessing with the "times of refreshing" from the actual presence of the Lord. Here, then, we have the Church begun without any heavenly position as yet revealed. But this was necessary:—for the first members of the Church being gathered at Jerusalem, it was necessary to defer disclosing to them the full purpose of God concerning them, until their nation had rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost. All the thousands then gathered in Jerusalem were, no doubt, baptized by one Spirit into one body, and exhibited then more practical union than has ever been seen since; though, as yet, they were only instructed in the glory of the millennial day. And this we can easily conceive—even that the Holy Ghost should begin to form the Church on earth, with its Head in heaven, though as yet untaught as to the position it should occupy until

the day of the Lord should come. Gathered *out* of rebellious Israel, they were for the moment in Jewish circumstances—in the temple, until the death of Stephen, when the nation having rejected the witness of the Holy Ghost, its doom was sealed.

Now on the death of Stephen, it will be remarked, a general break up at Jerusalem ensued. Not only was the gospel in consequence carried into Samaria, but Saul, one of the witnesses of the death of the first martyr Stephen, and who was thus legal evidence of what his nation had done, is called of God in a miraculous manner, to learn His mind and the fulness of His grace in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Saul of Tarsus, relentlessly persecuting the Church, is arrested by the light of the glory of God, and then hears from the risen Lord of His own identification with the people whom Saul was persecuting on earth; and he finds himself in the glory with Jesus, and hence is commissioned with a gospel distinct and peculiar from that already preached; for he was to be

a "minister and a witness both of those things which he had seen," (even those which I have now noticed,) and also of "those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Let us keep before our minds that the Church, the body of Christ, did not exist before the resurrection of Christ, that it dates its foundation from thence, that it was first formed by the Holy Ghost in Jewish circumstances, the materials being gathered *out* of Israel, and that when the nation had rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost, heaven was opened—Jesus received Stephen to Himself, thus declaring that the glory of heaven would be given to them who were cast out on earth. But still more: the nation having sealed its own condemnation, and the house being left desolate, the Lord discloses through Saul of Tarsus the place where He is Himself in glory, announcing to him, nevertheless, that He is one with His people on earth, and therefore the glory was open to them through Him. The great interval between earth and heaven was spanned,

and the chief of sinners was introduced to the Saviour, the Lord of heaven and earth, in the scene of glory, and then commissioned to go and be a minister and a witness of the things he had seen. With Saul's ministry, accordingly, a new era is begun for the Church. First, to Peter is unfolded in chap. x. that God can put all kindreds of race together in a common position without their being "common or unclean;" and forthwith Peter preaches to the Gentiles; the Holy Ghost manifestly sealing the testimony, and declaring that they were one body with the Jews already called out. After this, Antioch supersedes Jerusalem. The enmity of "the citizens" rises to its height; Herod the king kills James and imprisons Peter; but as the enmity developes itself, so does the independence of the Church of all earthly position show itself. In a word, the rest of the acts of the apostles is but a history of God's marked forbearance towards Israel, through the intervention of Paul, to whom the heavenly position was revealed, but who is used to give

the last testimony to his doomed nation; lingering over its ruins, if I may so say, according to the intense love of his own nature. But when he has learned from the ill-treatment he, in his own person, received from it and its judges, that all is ineffectual, and that the naturally-disparaged Gentile has more justice and mercy, (for he is forced to appeal to Cæsar,) he is led as a prisoner from Jerusalem to Rome, and from his Gentile prison, is now a personally-fitted vessel to set forth in writing, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the full purpose of God respecting the Church formed on earth.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians we are told that Christ is now Head of His body the Church, and that each member is, by the same power which raised Him, quickened and raised up and made to sit together with Him, in relation to Him, the Head, and in relation to one another, as of one body; for there is one body and one Spirit, and we have been all baptized by one Spirit into one body, besides each drinking of the same Spirit.

Now if I know that by the Spirit I am placed in relation to the body (for "God has set each of us in the body as it hath pleased him") with Christ in heaven, I can find it easy to understand how I am kept by the Spirit in relation to the body down here.

The Holy Ghost, as we have seen, formed the assembly at the first, but the saints then did not know their peculiar relation to Christ in heaven, as members to a Head risen and seated. They were, so to speak, on the line for this fuller knowledge, but it had not been revealed as yet. Now when it is revealed, the saints can understand how natural and consistent it is that they, who are set together with Christ in heaven, as a body in relation to a Head from whom each member derives its nourishment, are held in relation to one another down here; and thus the baptism by the Spirit into one body is spiritually apprehended. It is not merely the fact that we are all regenerated by the one Spirit, but that we are set in a peculiar associated, reciproca-

ting relation to one another, as the body of Christ our Head. When the Lord is pleased to set Himself forth as in any particular relation to us, it is our blessing to receive and understand what He communicates. Now He has never before declared Himself as Head of a body. He holds, blessed be His name, many relations; but now for the first time is it revealed that He is Head of His body, the Church, concerning which there are mysteries undeclared till now. There being but one Spirit and one body, it is by the same Spirit the saints are held together down here in positive membership. However scattered or carnally separated, they are kept in relation to the one body, as units of it, because the Spirit is one; and as He ministers with reference to Christ the Head, He must retain the members in the one body, though they, unless spiritually, can never know of this wonderful and universal bond. We cannot, with the natural mind comprehend how, if one member suffers, all suffer with it. But if I receive what

the Lord reveals to me, as to the close and inseparable union and relation of Himself and His body, I can readily comprehend how all over the universe the Holy Ghost holds every saint in corporate membership, not visible or even known, save to the spiritual, walking by faith in the light of this truth. The Holy Ghost is now on earth, sent down to connect each gift of the Father to Christ with Christ in heaven. Out of the world which rejected the Son of God, He is gathering a distinct company of saints, called the body of Christ, because peculiarly related to Him as His Bride, which He will present to Himself by and by to share with Him His sovereignty over earth in the day when, as the last Adam, He shall renovate everything from the ruin entailed on it by the first Adam. If the first Adam settled in the old world with a bride formed for himself, so will the last Adam, in a supreme degree, establish Himself in the day of His reign with *His* Bride formed from Himself. The Holy Ghost is ever acting with reference to the

heart of Christ, and He ever maintains in His ministries the oneness of the body, though we know that many saints do not enjoy or understand the blessing of this truth; still He nevertheless acts according to the mind of the Head, and with instinctive regard to the membership of the saints to one another. The natural mind cannot understand it, but it is revealed to faith, and we know in ourselves, in proportion to our spirituality, how truly this corresponds with our spiritual instincts. I must not only admit that I am presented in unity with the saints in heaven, but also that I am by the Holy Ghost held in relation and membership with every saint on earth, as being through Him of the body of Christ. The Lord as Head keeps His eye on His body as one; not in the fragments or piecemeal that man sees it, and the Holy Ghost retains each in his instinctive relation to the rest, and to the Lord in spite of all the carnality in them, which perverts their comprehending and responding to it. It is a fact for faith, and if not received, there

can be no energy of soul to respond to it, and therefore the gain of it cannot be known.

Let us briefly consider what is the gain to our souls of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church on earth, baptizing the members into one body. First. If the saints are not now brought to God by the one Spirit they can have no communion with one another, for it is by one Spirit we both, Jew and Gentile, have access to the Father. Mere life, though the same in quality and power, could not give sensible, reciprocating communion; nor could I by mere life be affected by the changes and alternations in the closest family ties. As to the people of God aforetime, there was no intention or possibility that they should be in this spiritual bond; i. e., that the action of one should affect the whole. The sin of Achan, and such like, affected the congregation nationally, but there was no spiritual suffering on account of it. If the Spirit be not holding all the members in one body now, the idea of a spiritual communion

between them must be unreal. For it is not enough that I should believe that as I am quickened by the Holy Ghost I can therefore have communion with all the converted. Conversion is an individual thing, and there could be no link between one converted man and another, save only that each had received like mercy from God. There must be a link, not only of a blessing common to all, but one corporately acting on all; and this only could be by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I may not be able to comprehend how each converted one by the work of the Holy Ghost is kept by Him in bodily relation to the rest, and therefore as two or more are in the Spirit, they are proportionately sensible of communion, of which they could not be, nor could they be affected by it, if not baptized by one Spirit into one body. And let me add, that it is from ignorance of this subject, while retaining the name of it, that we know and cultivate the communion of saints so little. It is also clear, that if in this communion one with another, all the natural hin-

drances are gone, whether Jew or Gentile, so that nothing which might have reached me as a man can now touch me—all enmity having been removed by the cross of Christ, and I, through Him, by one Spirit, having access to the Father, in spite of any position in which I had been. How blessed and helpful this must be !

Secondly. If the saints were not moulded together and fashioned by the Spirit there would be no habitation for God now. Buildings may be devoted to God's service, and we may invest them with reverential sanctity, and all the time we may overlook our ground or authority, or the mode by which God would dwell among us. This feeling is so received in Christendom that believers often fall into the current idea without ever ascertaining whether it be really so, or how it could be so. Is there a habitation for God now? Yes, certainly—not a visible one as in the days of the tabernacle and temple, but not the less known by those who seek and wait for it. The stumbling-block to many is,

that while everyone acknowledges the truth as a doctrine, few know or understand what it is in reality. In former times it depended on the building—the tabernacle or the temple; *now* it depends on the Spirit building together the members of Christ's body for a habitation of God. If the Spirit be not the ruling agent, and recognized as such, there can be no happy, worshipping perception of God's dwelling among us. And what would be the effect on our souls of realizing sensibly this wondrous fact of God dwelling with us, and making us an habitation for Himself? Would any manifestation to the external senses, such as there was in olden times, be equal in any degree to the deep, wondrous sense of the presence of God by the Holy Ghost to the soul now? Types and shadows having passed away, it is plain that it is only by the Spirit we can be His habitation now. We have used names and satisfied ourselves with them for realities; but we know what it was when the ignorant and unlearned, having the secrets of his heart made

manifest under the ministry of God's servant, should fall down and own that God was in you of a truth.

It would be the same now in proportion to the faith of those who meet in Christ's name, for the Holy Ghost has never forsaken His work, though we have lost sight of His purpose and have had no faith in Him; so that the defectiveness of our knowledge and perception of the blessing of being God's habitation is traceable to our unbelief, and we must confess that God's word is true, and that the reason of our ignorance and loss of this wondrous blessing—even the sense of being God's habitation—arises from our meagre apprehension of the Spirit's work towards the members of Christ's body down here. God does not dwell now on earth but in the building of the saints; and the saints cannot build themselves together. The fact of their being "lively stones" does not enable them to connect themselves with others. The Spirit is the cement, and *He* binds the already lively stones into a spiritual house for God.

If I see by faith the Spirit of God down here, and His special work in the saints, I am let into this knowledge of how God dwells with us, and I am also given by the Spirit to taste of this great and richest blessing. If I do not see the Spirit's place and work, whatever my desires, or pretensions, or assumption, I know nothing of what it is to be part of the habitation of God now. How important, then, that we should simply believe in the Spirit's place and work with reference to the whole company of saints on earth! And how the non-apprehension of this accounts for the state of many Christians! For unless we see the unity of the Spirit and maintain it, we forego our vocation.

Lastly, if we do not see the Spirit in the body holding the members in relation to one another, we cannot understand the place and value of the ministerial gifts. The gifts of the Spirit are given for the whole company on earth, "for the perfecting of the saints." The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal. No gift is

given to any member for his own separate use, or for the use of any separate congregation, but with the view of edifying the body of Christ. It is important to be clear on this point, because if I do not see the place and responsibility of the ministerial gifts, I must necessarily limit its usefulness, and in many ways divert it from its power and efficacy. If the Spirit be only individual, then the gift is individual; but if the Spirit builds together the saints on earth, then the gifts of the Spirit are for one just as much as for another; and all with a view for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ. Now, if a servant of God has a gift, and exercises it either independently of the edification of the body, or only for a section of the Church, then that servant is not honouring the Spirit, nor is he ever able to use his gift with true energy. He may be a devoted, zealous man, but He never can edify the body of Christ, for the simple reason that he is not in the mind and purpose of the Spirit. He may be

used for conversions, and for many good works, but he will never be used for the "perfecting of the saints," which is the main object of the Spirit in His service down here. If any one has the gift of an evangelist, and does not see that he is in the circle of the members of the body, controlled by the Spirit of God in that circle, as well as blessed by Him, such an one may be used in conversions, but will the converts take or seek the ground of the Church of God? I believe they could not, though truly members of the body of Christ. I believe that the reason why so many converted ones ever remain unperfected and unbuilded together is, that their ministers have not ministered to them according to the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit's mind and purpose has been lost sight of, and therefore the fulness of blessing is denied them, until they, through grace, seek for a ministry which owns His work and purpose.

In a word, if I believe that the purpose of the Spirit of God is to edify the body of Christ by ministerial gifts, "until we all come in the unity of the

faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," I must admit that every gifted member belongs as much to one member of the body as to another. He may be set in this place or that, and be tied there by circumstances; and the place to which he is tied may, by God's ordering, be that which stands *most* in need of His particular gift; but if I see that the Spirit is treating of the *whole body*, then I must see that His gift is for the *whole*, and not for a part; for He does not act with reference to a locality, but for the edification of the body; and the gift which suits the saints in a locality belongs to the body, and has its value in any part of it.

O for more grace! For the more grace is given to us, the more readily shall we believe and enter into the wondrous riches of God's mercy toward us; and instead of rejecting the mysteries of His grace, we shall pray the more earnestly that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened, that we may know His ways with us.

JACOB AT BETHEL, PENIEL,
AND BEERSHEBA.

Much gracious illustration of the love of Christ towards us may be found in the story of the Patriarch at these three places, or on the three occasions which they furnish. And each of them has its own lesson and comfort for us.

At Bethel (Gen. xxviii.) Jacob is a saint *under discipline*. His sin in deceiving his father had brought a rod upon him; and he was now an exile from his father's house, soon to be a drudge in the house of an injurious master in a strange and distant land.

He was now lying by night under the broad heavens, with the stones of the place for his pillow, and his travelling stick as his only companion. But the Lord meets him, as He always can meet His people in the place where they are accepting the punishment of their sins. He does not however remove the rod. He does not send him back to his father's house, undertaking to make all there comfortable to him again, but allows him still to pursue his wearisome, solitary journey. He does not take

away the rod. This is never His way. But He promises to be with him under it, to give him His presence in the distant place of his exile and bondage, and never to leave nor forsake him till He bring him back to the land of his fathers, his own pledged and promised inheritance.

This was so, and this is one of the perfect forms of love. This was love, not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. The Lord (to speak as men speak) did not spare Himself trouble or consult for His own ease, but looked simply and merely at the condition of the one He loved and ministered to it. Just like His way afterwards with the camp in the wilderness. When by their unbelief Israel made themselves wanderers in a barren and thirsty land for forty years, the God of glory in the cloud went about with them. He left them not, but was a wilderness-wanderer with them for forty years, as now He becomes a sojourner with Jacob in a distant land for twenty. "I am with thee," says the Lord to Jacob, "and will keep thee in all places whitherso-

ever thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Jacob must still be under the rod, an exile in a strange land, but the God of all grace will be there with him. This was love "in deed and in truth."

At Peniel (Gen. xxxii.) Jacob is in another character before us. Not as at Bethel, a saint under discipline for moral evil, but a saint *in an unbelieving spirit*, calculating and fearing, though religiously, when he should have been trustful, and calm, and satisfied. The fear of Esau had ensnared him, and he had surrendered confidence in God to that fear. He had not morally offended, as before at the bed-side of his father, but he had backslidden in spirit from God, reasoning, and praying, and laying his own plans instead of exercising peaceful confidence in God and a believing remembrance of His undertakings and promises.

The Lord cannot be indifferent to this. Surely not. He searches the reins and the heart, as He notices the

hands and the feet. He discerns between joint and marrow, between thoughts and intents, (Heb. iv.,) and cannot be indifferent to this backsliding in spirit, this departure from the simplicity and the quiet of a believing mind. He therefore contends with him. In the gloom of midnight He comes forth to wrestle with him. But withal, by the secret, in-working virtue of His Spirit, He restores His soul also. He revives faith in the heart of Jacob—commanding, triumphant, princely faith; so that Jacob faints not under this rebuke, sharp and peremptory as it was; but he is led again in the path of righteousness and beholds the face of God again in unclouded joy of heart, singing of his blessedness as he goes onward.

This was love, divine love again, though in another form. The Lord was consulting for Jacob's condition, and ministering to it accordingly, faithfully and practically. And this again is love "in deed and in truth." It is not loving "in word and in tongue," as amiable human nature often does, as some of us know to our humbling; but "in deed and in truth," as God must and does love.

At Beersheba, after all this, (Genesis xlvii.,) this same Jacob is seen in another character, another relationship to God. He is not, as at Bethel, an erring saint under discipline; nor as at Peniel, a saint in a backslidden state of heart for the time, calculating on his own resources, instead of using God's; but here at Beersheba, Jacob is a saint *in healthful jealousy of heart over his own ways*, fearful that he has already taken one wrong step, and pausing godlily ere he take a second. It is interesting and instructive to ponder this.

Jacob had been already persuaded that Joseph was indeed in Egypt. This we see at the close of the preceding chapter. And this persuasion had, very naturally, set him on the way to Egypt at once. "Joseph my son is yet alive," said he; "I will go and see him before I die." But now, on reaching Beersheba, he pauses. Beersheba was the southernmost point in the land, that looked right down towards Egypt; and as, with that land full in view, he begins to bethink himself afresh, and to remember the God of his fathers in connexion with it. He pauses, and offers sacrifices to the God of Isaac. A godly fear, which ever works repentance not to be repented of, seems to seize upon his spirit. It is not again the fear of man, which brings a snare, but the fear of God, which is the

beginning of wisdom. He pauses. He seems to remember that Egypt was forbidden ground. His grandfather, Abraham, had been defiled there, and sent out of it back to the land which he himself was then leaving, humbled and dishonoured. His father, Isaac, had been warned not to go there; and, according to this, it seems he offers sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac.

This was beautiful in its season. This was the exercise of the godly mind. He had listened to nature ere he set out, but now he must sift and challenge the way of nature in the light of the Lord. And under this awakening of his soul, this action of a quickened, sensitive conscience, he makes his appeal to God. And, blessed to tell it, the God of Bethel, and the God of Peniel, will approve Himself, in the riches of His grace and the perfections—the divine perfections—of His love, the God of Beersheba also. He appears to His saint that very night. If the saint, having used the two-edged sword, and having had his very thoughts and intents exposed to him, had likewise used the throne of grace and applied himself to it, the blessed God would surely let him know that He was sitting on that throne to show mercy and render help in the time of need. (Heb. iv.) He appears to him that night, and quiets the uneasiness of his heart, comforting

him with the assurance that he may continue his journey down to Egypt without fear or hesitation, for that He would be with him, give him a sight of Joseph, bless him in that land, and bring him up out of it again.

This was love again in its divine quality, love "in deed and in truth," love that consulted for its object. Yea, and all these are samples and witnesses of immediate, individual, personal love; that love to one's very self which the heart of the Lord both entertains and exercises. Are we conscious of it? Is it among the gifts of grace? Surely, indeed; though we taste it coldly and with some suspicion, it may be. It is more, as I may express it, than the *public* grace in which we stand, as in company with "all saints." At least, it is beside that. It savours of the white stone, which the overcomer is to receive at the hand of Christ in the day of the kingdom. (Rev. ii. 17.) These cases at Bethel, Peniel, and Beersheba witness this immediate, individual, personal love of which I speak. May we enjoy it by simple faith! It is no strange thing. Paul carried the sense of it about with him wherever he went, as we see in Gal. ii. 20.

THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE— A PATTERN.

When God was pleased to dwell in the midst of Israel, He revealed the manner and order of worship which He could accept. In this He is unchangeable. Circumstances may and have altered the manner of worship; but it is God who has directed the change, and made known to His people how He would now have them come before Him as worshippers. There never was at any time, after the Lord Jehovah tabernacled in the midst of Israel, power or license given to men to worship Him as they would. He was the object of worship, and He directed the way of approach into His presence. The idea, so frequently expressed, that men may worship Him as they think fit, provided their creed be correct, is foreign to the word of God. God has not said so; and what is man that he should regulate of his own accord how he will worship the Almighty One, who has made Himself known now to His people in

the character of Father. It is a mighty privilege that man can worship God, that God will permit him to come into His presence. Is man, the recipient of this privilege, to say how it shall be carried out? Shall the child or the father prescribe the manner of address suited to the position and relationship existing between them? Shall the servant or the master declare what language and demeanour is suited for the former in the presence of the latter? Shall the creature or the Creator lay down the mode of worship and method of approach to Him before whom the very angels veil their faces? What man would not do to men of like passions with himself, he thinks it not out of place to do to God. But He has given no such license. It behoves man to learn what He has declared on this point, to search and see how he is to draw nigh. Before the Lord Jesus came God would be worshipped at Jerusalem. The Lord made known that the place and manner of worship would change. "The hour cometh

when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 23, 24.) Spiritual in its nature and true in its way, such is the character of acceptable worship now.

If God has prescribed the manner, He has also made known the place of worship. It must be in the sanctuary, wherever that is. Of sanctuaries the word of God knows but two, the heavenly and the earthly; and as man cannot worship God how he will, no more can he worship Him where he will. There *was* the sanctuary on the earth, there *is* the sanctuary in heaven. True the earthly sanctuary varied in its locality. But God never appointed two sanctuaries on earth at once. When the temple of Solomon was dedicated, the tabernacle of Moses passed away. It had done its work. The presence of

the Lord had appeared on Mount Moriah. There He had chosen to dwell, and there from henceforth was the place of worship for all Israel till the Lord came. But the sanctuary on Mount Moriah has been destroyed. No spot on earth has been chosen in its place. There is no sanctuary now but that which is above. The temple of God is in heaven, the ark of the covenant is there, (Rev. xi. 19,) the golden altar is there, (Rev. viii. 3,) the high priest is there, (Heb. iv. 14,) and the worship must be in accordance with the position of the sanctuary. That which Moses erected, we are told, was but the pattern of things in heaven. "For see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." (Heb. viii. 5.) From this pattern no deviation could be permitted. So, too, when David prepared for the temple to be erected by Solomon, he gave to "his son the pattern of the porch and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner

parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God and of the treasuries of the dedicated things. All *this*, said *David*, the Lord made me to understand in writing by *his* hand upon me, *even* all the works of this pattern." (1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12, 19.) God in both cases ordered the form, and Moses and Solomon only carried out what had been appointed. But why this accuracy? Why this copying in the tabernacle of what Moses had seen? Why was no latitude allowed to the skilled workmen, Bezaleel, and Aholiab, and all the wise-hearted under them? Because the tabernacle and its furniture represented in various ways what none on earth, except Moses, had seen, the glory and excellency of one to whose perfection no art of man could add—the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the midst of Israel, as they encamped in the wilderness, was a space,

curtained off from the rest a hundred cubits by fifty. On the north, south, and west side no entrance could be found. The curtains of fine-twined linen, five cubits (about eight feet) high, aptly denoting the holiness of the place where God dwelt, effectually prevented any one gazing into the sacred enclosure. If by chance any one had got a sight of the court from a neighbouring eminence, what would he have seen? An oblong tabernacle, covered with badger-skins, presenting certainly nothing attractive to the eye as seen from without. To the priest within the tabernacle the case was very different, but to those without there was no beauty in it. So to those out of Christ there is no beauty in Him. On the three sides of the court nothing was seen but the fine-twined linen curtains. On the east side how different the appearance presented to Israel. There was the entrance, and instead of the plain, fine-twined linen, a hanging of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen marked the door. "For the gate of the court shall

be an hanging of twenty cubits of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen, wrought with needlework. (Ex. xxvii. 16.) Man was not left to devise the entrance for himself. If God separated the court of the tabernacle from the rest of the camp, He directed where the entrance should be, and of what the hangings should be composed. At the east end—and beautiful in its colours of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen—what does this mean? The court separated from the camp points out the holy nature of the place where God dwelt, and the entrance at the east end may teach us by whom man could go in, even by Christ the door, the branch or dayspring, ἀνατολή, but Christ as the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, Son of man, crucified, His heavenly character, sovereignty and death shadowed forth apparently in the colours of this curtain.

Entering through the door, three things are seen—an altar of brass, a laver or sea of brass, and the tabernacle beyond. Those that stood at the door

of the court could see the entrance of the holy place; but the curtain before it concealed from their view all that was within.

To the brazen altar all could come. It was for the need and use of all; hence it stood at the entrance of the court, as the first object that those who came there must see, proclaiming by its position that none could come within the sacred precincts, and walk in that hallowed enclosure, without passing that altar. The way was by the altar. On it were offered the sacrifices and offerings; at its foot the blood was poured out; while on its north side stood the offerer, as the priest sacrificed what he had brought. By sacrifice alone can man enter into the place where God dwells—the sacrifice of Christ, as shadowed forth by the altar and its victim. Ere he can come into God's presence, expiation must be made, as the blood poured out abundantly testified.

But while all in Israel could and must come to the brazen altar with their sacrifices and offerings, all could not

enter the tabernacle of the congregation. The priests alone had the right of entrance there. And to do that, it needed, not only expiation, but cleansing. When first consecrated as priests, they were washed all over; and ever after, as they entered on their work, whether at the altar or within the tabernacle, they had to wash their hands and feet in the brazen sea. (Exod. xxx. 20.) Cleansing, then, they needed as well as expiation—the two parts of the work of Christ on the cross. Out of His side flowed blood and water. (John xix. 34.) “This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood.” (1 John v. 6.) The altar and the sea tell us of these two things: the altar, that without shedding of blood is no remission—proclaiming by the sacrifice offered thereon that God could accept a sacrifice for sins, yet showing by the animals constantly slain that the real sacrifice had not yet been offered; the brazen sea, that man needed not merely an expiation for sin, but cleansing from it, ere he could enter the

house of God, and minister in His sanctuary. The laver probably typified the cleansing from defilement in walk by the word; but all that is here insisted on is the need of cleansing for those that ministered.

Beyond the laver was the tabernacle, with its curtained entrance of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen—the very same in texture and colour as that of the door of the court; showing that, as no entrance could be found into the court except through the man Christ Jesus, into the tabernacle there was no other door but Himself. All this the people could see, but they could not enter the holy place. But when the priest went in, what a scene presented itself! Without in the court the altar and the laver were of brass; here all was of gold. Gold around, and curtains above, and a vail in front. Gold, portraying divine righteousness; the curtains and vail, the manhood of the Lord. On the left and on the right he saw gold: but above, covering all, was the manhood of the Lord displayed in

the blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen. So far, they resembled the entrance-hangings; but there is a difference, and a marked one. On these curtains, and on the vail which hung before the most holy place, were cherubim of cunning work. All that belongs to the Lord is not made known to men at once. The sinner needs a revelation of the Lord in grace; the saint, or worshipper, can dwell with delight and interest on what belongs to His person. The sinner seeks for what is given him in Christ; the saint desires to know what is given to Christ. The former is occupied with his needs, and how Christ can meet them; the latter, having learnt all that, can be occupied with what belongs to his Lord. So to those outside in the court the only manifestation of the Lord was as He appears in grace. He is the door. By His blood and death expiation and cleansing are effected. But once within the tabernacle, the intrinsic character of divine righteousness meets the eye in the gold on the walls and furniture of the holy place;

and the power which belongs to the Lord Jesus as the one who has glorified the Father is taught in the curtains and vail.

On the curtains are cherubim of cunning work. Wherever cherubim are mentioned in Holy Writ, they seem to have reference to the exercise of judicial power. God's throne whence judgment comes forth is supported by cherubim. (See Ezekiel.) "He rode upon the cherub and did fly." (Psalm xviii. 10.) The place of His presence on earth, from whence He gave commandments to Moses, was between the cherubim. (Ex. xxv. 22.) The cherubim with the flaming sword debarred the approach to the tree of life after Adam's sin. (Gen. iii. 24.) If the blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen tell us of the manhood of the Lord, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, King, yet to be crucified, the cherubim on the curtains and vail would seem to teach that to this one belongs the power of judgment. "For he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness,

by that man whom he hath ordained." (Acts xvii. 31.) "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (John v. 22.)

But why were the cherubim not seen without on the hangings of the door. What sin-convicted soul can bear to think of judgment against sin? He knows he deserves it; but the thought of it overwhelms him. But tell of it to a soul that has found peace through the blood of the Lamb, which has passed from death unto life, which knows it will not come into judgment, because the Lord has borne it already, it can hear of it unmoved by fear. To one at the altar and in the court the grace of God in Christ is declared; to one inside the tabernacle, pardoned, cleansed, and walking separated from defilement, the prerogatives of the Lord can be displayed. If divine righteousness was symbolized by the gold, the power and authority to judge all that fell short of that was seen displayed in the cherubim on the curtains and the veil.

But what else was there to see? A

candlestick, a table, and an altar, and all of pure gold. No alloy, nothing that was not pure, could be accepted as befitting the place. In God's house, where He dwells, purity must be the characteristic; for He is pure.

The candlestick with its seven lamps was there to give light in the darkness; the table was there to receive the bread laid up before the Lord; while from the altar ascended, morning and evening, grateful incense to the Lord of hosts. But what had these to do with the worshipper—the priest who trod the floor of the sanctuary? Did these only set forth the character of Christ: or had he not an interest in them? Assuredly he had. The candlestick spoke of the light by which he could walk, when the darkness of night fell on all around outside. Christ is the light for His people. As He has life in Himself, and He gives life, so He is light and can give it. He is the true light, and “whosoever believeth in him shall not abide in darkness.” But, besides light for guidance in the sanctuary, food is wanted to sus-

tain those who minister. This, too, God provides. The high priest lighted the lamps, the high priest placed the shew-bread on the table. (Lev. xxiv.) God provides for His priests both light and food. Christ answers to their wants in both capacities. From the table the priest was fed with the loaves which, placed before the Lord, He had accepted. The priest could feed in the sanctuary, but it must be on what God had ordained. But the priest did not eat of the same bread as that which was taken in before the Lord. The Lord did not have for His portion a part of what the priests eat; but the priests eat the very bread which had been taken in before God, and which He had accepted. So we, through grace, feed on Christ, the accepted sacrifice, the Son in whom the Father is well pleased. What a feast for us! How all the priest needs he finds provided for him, and just as he needs it. In the court he had the altar and the brazen sea, within the tabernacle he had light and food. What he required ere he could become a worshipper

he found in the court; what he wanted as a worshipper he found in the tabernacle. But God ordered each thing, and he found it suited to his wants.

One thing more claims attention in the holy place—an altar of gold, on which the high priest burnt incense, morning and evening. Every morning and evening a lamb was offered up on the brazen altar in the court, as a burnt-offering. Every morning, when Aaron dressed the lamps, and every evening, when he lighted them, he burnt incense upon the golden altar. (Exodus xxx.) Thus, in connexion with the daily sacrifice, there was the daily incense; teaching that the worship of God's people needed incense to make it acceptable to Him. And what is that incense? The merits of Christ. We see in (Rev. viii. 3—5) the incense offered up with the prayers of God's saints, and we learn their acceptance by the answer accorded. And what perfume was it that was used thereon? God had arranged what it should be; He Himself made known the mixture. (Exod. xxx. 34—38.) Man

could not use it, however fragrant, for his own pleasure. It was most holy to the Lord, "a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy." Of each separate ingredient no quantity is mentioned, but equal quantities of all; nor is it stated how much was to be made at once. For who shall measure the quantity needful for us? Who shall estimate the sweetness of the merits of the Lord? Who shall say that one ingredient is more needful than another? All, then, that we find in the holy place tells of Christ; and the priest admitted there to minister, finds the high priest has trimmed and lighted the lamps, arranged the shew-bread on the table, and burnt the daily incense on the golden altar. With these the priest had nothing to do, but to receive the benefits that resulted therefrom. He had to sacrifice for the people outside, and to offer the bread of his God. (Lev. xxi. 17.) Within the sanctuary he could minister, "and eat the bread of his God." (Lev. xxi. 22.)

Behind the golden altar hung the

gorgeous vail, hiding from the view of the priest the most holy place, as the holy place had been screened from the gaze of those who had access only to the court. Behind that vail none but the high priest could enter. He, and he alone, could go into the very place where the throne of the Lord was established on the earth, the mercy seat between the cherubim. How each step of the way, from the entrance of the court to the most holy place, reminds us of Christ as the only entrance, and the unfitness of man for God's presence. Within the court any of the children of Israel could come with their offering, and stand by the brazen altar whilst it was being sacrificed; within the holy place the priests alone could go; and within the holy of holies none but the high priest could enter. But the vail has been rent: we can see into it. The flesh of Christ was the vail. Rent on the cross, no vail now divides the two chambers. Admitted as priest into the holy place, nothing can hinder us from seeing the most holy place, and entering

it likewise. When the high priest entered once a year on the day of atonement, he came with incense in his hand and the blood of atonement; the incense to cover the mercy seat while he drew nigh with the blood, that he die not. Acting thus by divine appointment, he could not feel at ease in that place. But we can go there with *boldness*; not like the high priest, to sprinkle the blood on and before the mercy seat, and then to come out; the blood has indeed been sprinkled, therefore we can draw nigh with perfect confidence, for sin has been put away. And since the vail has been rent, we can see, as it were, right into the holy of holies. What was there then? All around was gold; above were the curtains of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen, with cherubim of cunning work; before the high priest stood the ark and the mercy seat with the cherubim overshadowing the latter with their wings. Here was the dwelling-place of God—"He sitteth between the cherubim." (Psalm xcix. 1.) These with outstretched wings had their faces

looking to one another toward the mercy seat. (Exod. xxv. 20.) And what did they there see—the law? No; that was covered up by the mercy seat placed on the ark. The gold of the mercy seat typifying divine righteousness? Doubtless. But something else was there. On that which typified the unsullied, untarnishable righteousness of God, marks of blood could be seen. No stain could be discovered in that righteousness, for it is perfect, it is divine. Yet there were marks of blood—the blood of atonement. How beautiful was this! The supporters of God's throne, emblems of His judicial power, whose acts are based on the law deposited within the ark, look to the blood of atonement, by which expiation was made, and man could righteously be received into God's presence. Here indeed "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." Of what are these two, the ark and the mercy seat, typical? Christ. In the ark were deposited the tables of the covenant. If Israel had kept the covenant they had

entered into with God, (Exod. xix.,) the blessings annexed to its observance would have been theirs. But they sinned and forfeited all; and the very tables were broken, symbolical of their failure in keeping it. New tables were given and laid up in the ark. Israel had failed. All blessing on the ground of their obedience was at an end. But One was to come who would keep the law perfectly. In the ark were the unbroken tables laid up. In the ark were they kept intact. In Christ we see them perfectly fulfilled. "Thy law is within my heart." He, and He alone, could observe all that the two tables had enjoined, and by virtue of His obedience the blessings Israel forfeited the remnant will yet enjoy; and by virtue of that same obedience we enter into blessing likewise. Not that He kept the law vicariously. But He kept it, He magnified it. It was holy, just, and good. He observed it. Showed Himself, by keeping it, to be the Lamb without blemish and without spot, the only sacrifice God could accept, but which

having accepted, we, believers in the Lord, enter on all the blessings which His obedience can procure. If the ark, with the tables of the covenant within it, was typical of the Lord, not less so was the mercy seat above it. He is the propitiation for our sins. (1 John ii. 2.) He is also the propitiatory or mercy seat. (Rom. iii. 25.) (*ἰλαστήριον*, not *ἰλασμός*.) In Him God can meet with the sinner, and the sinner meet with God.

Wherever we go, then, in the court or tabernacle, we see what speaks of Christ. By Him alone can an entrance be gained to the house of God. He is everything to the sinner, as He is all that the saint wants. We never get beyond what He is for His people. We can never reach a position where we have no need of Him. "In him all fulness dwells," and "of his fulness have we all received." (Col. i., John i.) The sinner must enter through Christ into the court, the worshipper into the tabernacle by Him, and as he goes through the holy place we find Him supplying

all his wants; and when he reaches the furthest point in the tabernacle, the meeting-place between him and God, there he finds the same person. It is Christ in the most holy place, as it is Christ in the court, and Christ in the holy place. In the innermost recesses of the sanctuary, as at the entrance to the court without, we meet with the Lord Jesus, different, indeed, in manifestation, yet withal the same in person. The sacrifice for sin, the food and light for the priests, the needed and accepted incense. When the priest was offering up the daily sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering without in the court, the high priest was engaged at the altar of incense. Between "the evenings" was the lamb to be sacrificed; (Exod. xxix. 41, Hebrew;) between "the evenings" (xxx. 8) was the incense to be burnt. As the smoke ascended from the altar without, the cloud ascended from the altar within. No mere priest could thus minister at the golden altar; one only can render worship acceptable before God. Christ is the Lamb—the merits of Christ

form the incense—Christ is the High Priest.

Divine righteousness was seen portrayed all around within the tabernacle, but overshadowing it was the curtain, which told of the Perfect Man, the Heavenly One, about to suffer.

The ark and the mercy-seat tell their tale of the Lord. And what a tale it is! The Perfect One who never sinned, sprinkling His own precious blood on the mercy seat; Himself at once the propitiatory and propitiation.

If such was the earthly tabernacle, what is the heavenly? What the earthly shadowed forth, that we have in the heavenly. It is Christ everywhere: the way, the truth, the life—the only means of access to the Father—the living bread—the light of the sanctuary—the Intercessor. But just as of old God ordered the form and fashion of the house, and the manner of worship, so now. If we worship in a different manner, it is because God has altered it. If we worship in a different place, it is because He has changed it. And as

they worshipped according to His directions, so must we now. He has given rules: (1 Cor. xii.—xiv. :) we must follow them. It is God's house we belong to; it is God's temple we worship in; and it is God's mind we must conform to. We worship in the heavenly sanctuary. The power of the blood maintains us there. God's justice is satisfied; His holiness has been vindicated. The sinner is not consumed, nor the saint terrified; for Christ has satisfied God, and given confidence to man.

“WITH ALL THY GETTING,
GET UNDERSTANDING.”

The great desire of God is that we should understand every act and leading of His grace toward us. Human parents do much for their children without ever making known to them their intent and pleasure, and therefore much of the lives of the children are spent in misunderstanding the parental treatment, and endeavouring to escape from

it, instead of in co-operation with it. Very different is the way of our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessings, I believe, whether it be place, gift, or anything else, are often postponed and delayed, until we are intelligent enough to see their value. The Lord unfolds to His servant the gift according as he attains ability to comprehend it, and God acknowledges the exercise of it, and gives scope for it according as the servant has intelligence or subjection to follow simply with his mind therein. In order to "think so as to be wise as God has dealt to each the measure of faith," (Rom. xii. 3,) a man must know the measure; and therefore, if he is "skilful in the word of righteousness," he is grown up and able to discern between good and evil. If I am able to discern, I understand God's dealing with me, and get the blessing of it; and if not, I am only a babe, and unskilful in the word of righteousness. I have need of milk: solid food is unfit for me. I am alive, but I have no sense or intelligence of God's ways with me.

Now a want of this sense must debar me from the communication of God's mind and purposes. You would not talk to a babe about its inheritance; you would only speak and open your mind to it according as it gained sense to understand. This I believe God does in a special manner; and that, not only with regard to blessings, but in the same way, though in a lesser degree, in chastening. I do not say that He does not chasten unless we understand the good of it, or that we always do understand it; on the contrary, I believe that He often chastens to vindicate His own care when His child does not notice it at all; but what I say is, that unless we are exercised thereby, no good comes of it, and no soul who knows His love will be satisfied to let His chastening pass by without understanding it. If an earthly friend indicates any coolness or distance towards me, do I not, in proportion as I love such an one, seek explanation of it? And just so with regard to the love of Christ; in proportion as we value it shall we seek for an ex-

planation of any marked visitation from Him to us. This is the way of God with us in either chastening or blessing, but we see it more plainly and markedly in blessings. It is "to him that hath" that "more shall be given." The man who had made most got in preference to any who had made less. God, I repeat, unfolds according as we are prepared for it; and hence circumstances are constantly used to prepare us for a due appreciation of His blessings. Thus Paul, in the prison at Rome, and John at Patmos, were through circumstances prepared, the one to reveal the heavenly glory as from heaven, and the other to reveal the Lord's glory on earth. When Jonah lost his gourd, he was able to understand God's feelings; and when thus *prepared* to hear them, they are imparted to him. God wants us to know the way whereby we go, and to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. I do not believe that any soul, no matter how great its acquisition of knowledge from the Scriptures, has really got on beyond its

intelligence of God's ways *with itself*; so that it is in proportion as I understand God's ways with *myself* that I have been taught of Him. If I understand His ways with me only in the wilderness, then I am in the wilderness; that is to say, the wilderness is the measure of my attainment and advance. If in heaven, then I am in the same sense in heaven, and so on.

I dare say some of us have observed very often how some spiritual desire like a flash of light has engaged the soul; but though the enjoyment of it be remembered, we find that we practically have not reached it; and the reason of this is, that we are not prepared for it. I have no doubt that the grapes of Eshcol are often tasted by us, when we have a great deal of exercise to go through, and intelligence to acquire before we reach Eshcol. Caleb, after tasting the grapes, needed forty years of preparation ere he was in actual possession of Eshcol: and surely his heart must then have acknowledged God's gracious way with him. And when

he was in full possession—when he comprehended the nature, order, and value of the blessing he had so long before tasted of, he could *then* sing “with understanding.” It is when we reach Eshcol that we see how necessary it has been for us to go through so much exercise and toil of spirit; for there it is that we comprehend the excellence of the blessing, and are in it too. To be in the place of blessing, you must not only prize the blessing, but you must also feel that you are suited to the place, and, as a necessary consequence, separated from what is unsuited to it. It is not all in a moment that we see how our idolatry stands in the way as a barrier to our reaching the place or the possession of the grapes, the taste and excellence of which we feel we appreciate. And chastening may often fall on us in order to remove the obstacle and prepare us.

There can be no basket of first-fruits, (see Deut. xxvi.,) unless we understand our blessings and possess them. Hence the prayer, that Christ may dwell in our

hearts by faith, that we, "being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height," &c. The Lord give us to understand the nature, order, and value of His blessings, that we may be prepared to enjoy them suitably!

FRAGMENT.

The Church in the glory, that is to come, will have all the glories of Christ laid open to her. There will be no distinction between Christ and God, for it is "the throne of God and the Lamb." All the glories, all the relations between them, will be open to the Church, for she is *with* Him there, as His Bride. The earthly people who behold Jehovah in the temple will not know the Lord as Bridegroom in the heavenlies, which is a higher thing.

The Smyrnian Church is recognized as in a position to see the blessedness of this; and thus the character in which

Christ comes to her is perfectly spiritual and moral. They were brought into sorrow and humiliation, but they were in a state capable of having sympathy with the mind of Christ. *Taste for truth* depends upon the state of your own souls. There are some states of soul in which the circumstances connected with Christ take most hold of the soul, and others in which the Person of Christ has most attraction. The calibre of a person's soul may be known by what he most delights in of Christ. The Laodicean state of the Church is met by the promise of sitting on *Christ's throne*, to those who overcome. Christ speaks of Himself to John as the first and the last; which was dead and is alive again. So here to Smyrna. What was comfort to John would be comfort to them. There is an answer in the Person of Christ to all the circumstances.

CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS.

If there be one thing of importance now, it is christian devotedness. I do not separate this from christian doctrine, but found it on it. I do not surely separate it from the presence and power of the Spirit, one of the most important of these doctrines, for it is produced by it. But christian devotedness founded on the truth, and produced by the power of the Spirit, I believe to be of the utmost importance for the saints themselves and for the testimony of God. I believe surely that doctrine is of deep importance now, clearness as to redemption, and the peace that belongs to the Christian through divine righteousness, the presence and living power of the Comforter sent down from heaven, the sure and blessed hope of Christ's coming again to receive us to Himself that where He is we shall be also, that we shall be like Himself seeing Him as He is, and that if we die we shall be present with Him, the knowledge that risen with Him we shall be blessed not only through but *with* Christ, the deep, prac-

tical identification with Him through our being united with Him by the Holy Ghost; all these things, and many truths connected with them, held in the power of the Holy Ghost, separate us from the world, shelter the soul by the spiritual possession of Christ glorified, the conscious possession of Christ, from the cavils of current infidelity, and give a living spring to the joy and hope of the whole christian life. But the expression of the power of them in the heart will manifest itself in devotedness.

Christianity has exercised a mighty influence over the world, even where it is openly rejected, as well as where it is professedly received. Care of the poor and the supply of temporal wants have become recognized duties of society. And where the truth is not known and Christianity is corrupted, diligent devotedness to this, on the false ground of merit, is largely used to propagate that corruption. And even where infidelity prevails the habits of feeling produced by Christianity prevail, and man becomes the object of diligent, though often of

perverted, care. The testimony of the true saint surely should not be wanting where falsehood has imitated the good effects of truth. But there are higher motives than these; and it is of the true character of devotedness I would speak.

I accept as the general rule that, any special call of God apart, Christians should abide in the calling wherein they are called. This is only the place of their walk, its motives and character are behind. These are summed up in one word—Christ. He is at once the life and the object or motive of life in us, giving thus its character to our walk. “To me,” says the apostle, “to live is Christ.” There are two great parts of divine life of which devotedness is one. Both are infinite and unspeakable privileges for us and both perfected by, manifested in, Christ. The one God Himself, the other the actings and display of His nature, as love, the divine witness of His nature which is love. This was seen in Christ. His communion with His Father was perfect, as was His desire to glorify Him. Life to Him here

below was life “*δια του πατερα.*” But He was the display, at all cost to Himself, of divine love to men. These could not be separated in His soul. His Father was His continual delight and object, His exercise of love and display of His Father, the divine nature by it, constant and perfect. But this was His devotedness. Another principle must be added to this to complete those which governed His walk: undivided obedience to His Father’s will, His having that will for His constant motive. Love to the Father and obedience to Him gave form and character to His love to us. And so it is with us, only that He Himself comes in as the more immediate object, but this in no way hindering the display of the divine nature in love. “*Be ye imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love even as Christ has loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.*” Note here the fulness of motive and character which is shown, and how high and blessed that motive and character is. We are followers and imitators of

God: We walk in love as Christ loved us. It is the exercise of divine love as displayed in Christ. There is no stint in it. He gave Himself. Nothing short of Himself, wholly; a principle often repeated as to Christ, His love to us, for He gave Himself for us. Yet God was the object and motive constituting its perfection: "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." It is thus we are called to walk, to imitate God, to follow Him as He displayed Himself in Christ.

If it be blessed to joy in God, who is love, it is blessed to follow Him in the love He has exercised. Yet as displayed in Christ as a man, it has God Himself for its object: and so with us. The love that descends down from God working in man, rises up always towards and to God as its just and necessary object. It can have nothing lower as its spring, towards whomsoever it is exercised. All the incense of the meat offering was burnt on the altar, however sweet the savour to others. This constitutes, as I have said, its essential character and

excellence; nor do its just actings in us come short of its actings in Christ. "Hereby," says John, "know we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." There is no question of any cup of wrath for us. Here Christ stood, of course, alone, but all self-sacrifice displayed in Him we are called upon to display, as having His life, Himself, in us.

But I will consider this a little more methodically before I press it hortatively on my brethren.

As to reward, *as motive*, or merit, it is clear that any such thought destroys the whole truth of devotedness, because there is no love in it. It is self, looking like "James and John," for a good place in the kingdom. Reward there is in Scripture, but it is used to encourage us in the difficulties and dangers which higher and truer motives bring us into. So Christ Himself, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." Yet we well know that His motive was love. So Moses: "He endured as seeing him who

is invisible, for he had respect to the recompense of reward." His motive was caring for his brethren. So reward is ever used, and it is a great mercy in this way. And every man receives his reward according to his own labour.

The spring and source of all true devotedness, is divine love filling and operating in our hearts: as Paul says, "the love of Christ constrains us." Its form and character must be drawn from Christ's actings. Hence grace must first be known for oneself, for thus it is I know love. Thus it is that that love is shed abroad in the heart. We learn divine love in divine redemption. This redemption sets us too, remark, in divine righteousness before God. Thus all question of merit, of righteousness, is shut out, and self-seeking in our labour set aside. "Grace," we have learnt, "reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ." The infinite, perfect love of God towards us has wrought, has done so when we were mere sinners, has thought of our need, given us eternal life in Christ when we were dead in

sins; forgiveness and divine righteousness when we were guilty; gives us now to enjoy divine love, to enjoy God by His Spirit dwelling in us, and boldness in the day of judgment, because as Christ, the judge, is, so are we in this world. I speak of all this now in view of the love shown in it. True that could not have been divinely without righteousness. That is gloriously made good through Christ, and the heart is free to enjoy God's unhindered love: a love shown to men in man. For the very angels learn "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." This knits the heart to Christ, bringing it to God in Him, God in Him to us. We say nothing separates us from this love. The first effect is to lead the heart up, thus sanctifying it: we bless God, adore God, thus known; our delight, adoring delight, is in Jesus.

But thus near to God and in communion with Him, thus not only united, but consciously united, to Christ by the Holy Ghost, divine love flows into and through our hearts. We become ani-

mated by it through our enjoyment of it. It is really "God dwelling in us," as John expresses it; "His love shed abroad in our hearts," as Paul does. It flows thus forth as it did in Christ. Its objects and motives are as in Him, save that He Himself comes in as revealing it. It is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord; not the less God, but God revealed in Christ, for there we have learnt love. Thus in all true devotedness, Christ is the first and governing object; next, "His own which are in the world;" and then our fellow-men. First their souls, then their bodies, and every want they are in. His life of good to man governs ours, but His death governs the heart. "Hereby know we love because he laid down his life for us." "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again."

We must note, too, that as redemption and divine righteousness are that

through which grace reigns and love is known, all idea of merit and self-righteousness is utterly excluded, so it is a new life in us which both enjoys God and to which His love is precious; which alone is capable of delighting, as a like nature, in the blessedness that is in Him, and in which His divine love operates towards others. It is not the benevolence of nature, but the activity of divine love in the new man. Its genuineness is thus tested, because Christ has necessarily the first place with this nature, and its working is in that estimate of right and wrong which the new man alone has, and of which Christ is the measure and motive. "Not as we hoped," says Paul (it was more than he hoped,) speaking of active charity; "but ye gave yourselves first to the Lord, and to us by the will of God."

But it is more than a new nature. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; and God's love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. And as it springs up as a well in us unto eternal life, so

also living waters flow out from us by the Holy Ghost which we have received. All true devotedness, then, is the action of divine love in the redeemed, through the Holy Ghost given to them.

There may be a zeal which compasses sea and land, but is in the interest of a prejudice, or the work of Satan. There may be natural benevolence clothed with a fairer name, and irritated if it be not accepted for its own sake. There may be the sense of obligation and legal activity, which, through grace, may lead further, though it be the pressure of conscience, not the activity of love. The activity of love does not destroy the sense of obligation in the saint, but alters the whole character of his work. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." In God, love is active, but sovereign; in the saint it is active, but a duty, because of grace. It must be free to have the divine character—to be love. Yet we owe it all, and more than all, to Him that loved us. The Spirit of God which dwells in us is a Spirit of adoption, and so of liberty with God,

but it fixes the heart on God's love in a constraining way. Every right feeling in a creature must have an object, and, to be right, that object must be God, and God revealed in Christ as the Father; for in that way God possesses our souls. Hence Paul, speaking of himself, says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." His life was a divine life. Christ lived in him, but it was a life of faith, a life living wholly by an object, and that object Christ; and known as the Son of God loving and giving Himself for him. Here we get the practical character and motive of christian devotedness—living to Christ. We live on account of Christ: He is the object and reason of our life; (all outside is the sphere of death;) but this in the constraining power of the sense of His giving Himself for us. So, in a passage already referred to, "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, if

one died for all, then were all dead: and He died for all, that they which live should not live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again." They live to and for that, and nothing else. It may be a motive for various duties, but it is the motive and end of life. "We are not our own, but bought with a price, and have to glorify God in our bodies, which are his."

What is supposed here is not a law contending or arresting a will seeking its own pleasure, but the blessed and thankful sense of our owing ourselves to the love of the blessed Son of God, and a heart entering into that love and its object by a life which flows from Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence it is a law of liberty. Hence, too, it can only have objects of service which that life can have, and the Holy Ghost can fix the heart on; and that service will be the free service of delight. Flesh may seek to hinder, but its objects cannot be those the new man and the Holy Ghost seek. The heart ranges in the sphere in which Christ

does. It loves the brethren, for Christ does; all the saints, for He does. It seeks the all for whom Christ died, yet knowing that only grace can bring any of them; and "endures all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." It seeks "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" to see the saints grow up to Him who is the Head in all things and walk worthy of the Lord. It seeks to see the Church presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ. It continues in its love, though the more abundantly it loves, the less it be loved. It is ready to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

The governing motive characterizes all our walk—all is judged by it. A man of pleasure flings away money; so does an ambitious man. They judge of *the value of things by pleasure and power*. The covetous man thinks their path folly, judges of everything by its tendency to enrich. The Christian judges of everything by Christ. If it hinders His glory in oneself or another,

it is cast away. It is judged of not as sacrifice, but cast away as a hindrance. All is dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. To cast away *dross* is no great sacrifice. How blessedly self is gone here! "*Gain to me*" has disappeared. What a deliverance that is! Unspeakably precious for ourselves and morally elevating! Christ gave Himself. We have the privilege of forgetting self and living to Christ. It will be rewarded, our service in grace; but love has its own joys in serving in love. Self likes to be served. Love delights to serve. So we see, in Christ, on earth, now; when we are in glory He girds Himself and serves us. And shall not we, if we have the privilege, imitate, serve, give ourselves to Him, who so loves us? Living to God inwardly is the only possible means of living to Him outwardly. All outward activity not moved and governed by this is fleshly and even a danger to the soul—tends to make us do without Christ and brings in self. It is not devotedness, for devotedness is

devotedness to Christ, and this must be in looking to being with Him. I dread great activity without great communion; but I believe that when the heart is with Christ it will live to Him.

The form of devotedness, of external activity, will be governed by God's will and the competency to serve; for devotedness is an humble, holy thing, doing its master's will; but the spirit of undivided service to Christ is the true part of every Christian. We want wisdom: God gives it liberally. Christ is our true wisdom. We want power: we learn it in dependence through Him who strengthens us. Devotedness is a dependent, as it is an humble, spirit. So it was in Christ. It waits on its Lord. It has courage and confidence in the path of God's will, because it leans on divine strength in Christ. *He* can do all things. Hence it is patient and does what it has to do according to His will and word: for then He can work; and He does all that is done which is good.

There is another side of this which we have to look at. The simple fact of un-

divided service in love is only joy and blessing. But we are in a world where it will be opposed and rejected, and the heart would naturally save self. This Peter presented to Christ and Christ treated as Satan. We shall find the flesh shrink instinctively from the fact and from the effect of devotedness to Christ, because it is giving up self, and brings reproach, neglect, and opposition on us. We have to take up our cross to follow Christ; not to return to bid adieu to them that are at home in the house. It is our home still, if we say so, and we shall at best be "John Marks" in the work. And it will be found it is ever then — "suffer me *first!*" If there be anything but Christ it will be *before* Christ, not devotedness to Him with a single eye. But this is difficult to the heart that there should be no self-seeking, no self-sparing, no self-indulgence! Yet none of these things are devotedness to Christ and to others, but the very opposite. Hence, if we are to live to Christ, we must hold ourselves dead, and alive unto God

through Jesus Christ our Lord. And in point of fact if the flesh be practically allowed it is a continual hindrance, and reproach and opposition are then a burden, not a glory. We have with Paul to "bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies," and so to have the sentence of death made good in ourselves. Here the Lord's help, through trials and difficulties, comes in. But we are "more than conquerors through him that loved us." Nothing separates us from that love. But if we come to the management of our own heart, we shall find that this "always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus" is the great difficulty and tests the inward state of the soul. Yet there is no liberty of service nor power but in the measure of it; only, remark, we have this power in the sense of grace. It is the power of the sense we have of His dying and giving Himself for us, which by grace makes us hold ourselves as dead to all but Him. Outwardly it

may be comparatively easy, and so is outward labour when self and Satan's power are not felt in opposition. But to have Christ's dying always made good against self, detected by the cross, supposes Christ to be all in the affections. The true power and quality of work is measured by it—the operation of God's Spirit by us. This is the one way of devotedness in God's sight, and God's power and the having the mind of Christ in the service we do render. This only is life. All the rest of our life, not to speak of loss or judgment, *perishes* when our breath goes forth. It belongs to the first Adam and to the scene he moves in, not to the Second. It is only the life which we live by Christ which remains as life.

Its motives and character are twofold: The cross and Christ in glory. The love of Christ constrains us in the cross to give ourselves wholly up to Him who has so loved us, given *Himself* wholly up for us. The winning Christ and being like Him in glory gives energy, and the spring and power of hope to our path.

But how constraining and mighty is the first motive, if we have really felt it! Yet how lowly. It makes us of little esteem to ourselves in the presence of such love. We see we are not our own but bought with a price. Nor is this all. The sense of the love of Christ takes possession of the heart, constrains us. We desire to live too to Him who gave Himself for us. The perfection of the offering and the absoluteness and perfectness with which it was offered, alike His love to us in it, has power over our souls. "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God." The sense that we are not our own deepens the claim on our hearts, yet takes away all merit in the devotedness, so wise and sanctifying are God's ways! How does the thought too of winning Him make all around us but dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Him! What is all compared with pleasing Him, possessing Him, being with Him, and like Him for ever! It puts the value of Christ, as the motive, on everything we do. It

leads to true largeness of heart, for all dear to Him becomes precious to us, yet keeps from all looseness of natural feelings, for we are shut up to Christ. What is not His glory is impossible. It puts sin practically out of the heart by the power of divine affections, by having the heart filled with Him. Practically the new nature only lives with Christ for its object.

It applies too, remark, to everything, because we have to please Christ in everything. Dress, worldly manners, worldliness in every shape disappears. They cannot be like or agreeable to Him whom the world rejected, because He testified to it that its works were evil. The tone of the mind is unworldly, does not refer to it, save to do good to it when it can. The place of the Christian is to be the epistle of Christ. Christ's thus possessing the heart has a circumscribing power. The motives, thoughts, relationships of the world do not enter into the heart. But Christ moving all within, and all being referred in the heart to Him, it carries

out its own character in Him out into the world. Kept from the evil, it is the active exercise of good that is in Him, the love of God; the heart shut up to God, but all the blessedness of God going out in the measure in which the vessel contains it. This love is active. Christ "has purified to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Christ's love was active, but it is guided by the mind of Christ. It loves the brethren as Christ did; that is, has its spring in itself, not in the object; but feels all their sorrows and infirmities, yet is above them all so as to bear and forbear, and find in them the occasion of its holy exercise. It is alike tender in spirit and firm in consistency with the divine path, for such was Christ's love. It has another character: whatever its devotedness and activity, it is obedience. There cannot be a righteous will in a creature, for righteousness in a creature is obedience. Adam fell, having a will independent of God. Christ came to do the will of Him that sent Him, and in His highest devotedness His

path was that of obedience. "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me, but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." This both guides in devotedness and keeps us quiet and humble.

Our conclusion, then, is simple undivided devotedness to Christ; Christ the only object, whatever duties that motive may lead to faithfulness in; nonconformity to the world which rejected Him; a bright heavenly hope connecting itself with Christ in glory, who will come and receive us to Himself and make us like Him, so that we should be as men that wait for their Lord; His love constraining us, in all things caring for what He cares for; Christ crucified, Christ before us as our hope, the centres round which our whole life turns.

There is another point I may do well to notice, which makes the plain difference between devotedness and natural kindness. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which

is in heaven." The Lord does not tell them to let their good works shine before men; elsewhere He says the contrary. But their profession of Christ is to be so distinct that men may know to what to attribute their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven. What is wanted among Christians, is that through grace they should be Christians devoted, plainly devoted, in all their ways, devoted in heart and soul to Him who loved them and gave Himself for them.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Continued from page 247.)

Before He rose from the dead, and ascended on high, Christ *alone* was anointed with the Holy Ghost. After He had died for us, He received it *for us*; but it could not be for us until He had atoned for sins; but it is important to see that *then* He received it *for us*.

As to the Holy Ghost, it was a question discussed between the eastern and western churches whether He proceeded

from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son. But the question is simply a theological one, and it is not worth while taking up either side—in one sense, they are both right.

In answer to a question on John xiv., as to the Holy Ghost, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," it was remarked that there was one very unhappy thing in our translation of the New Testament--the pains-taking change of words in English to represent the same word in the Greek. The passage quoted is an instance of the evil of this; for its force seems to be that the Holy Ghost was already *with* them, but would soon be *in* them: but the true meaning is, "He shall abide with you, and be in you," i.e., "He shall not leave you as I do now, but remain with you; and more even than that—He shall be in you." It is really descriptive of what the Holy Ghost would be when He came. He would abide with them, and not leave them.

We have an instance of the same thing in our translators in John v., as to the word "damnation."

Ver. 13. Those who are said to be sons are further said to be born of the will of God—the will of man and of the flesh having no place.

Ver. 14, &c. In this verse Christ is seen in His own proper revelation, but as the fulness to us. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” The other parts of this passage are parentheses. Verse 17 continues what John the Evangelist says. The expression “grace for grace” is cumulative, meaning grace upon grace.

The verse should be, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of *an* only-begotten from a Father,” &c. Here it is the kind of glory that the apostles saw that is mentioned. It was the glory of an only-begotten from His Father—it is the character of the glory which they saw. They saw Him in sonship-glory, and in only-begotten sonship-glory. This glory is His; in it He is entirely alone. None but Himself can be *only-begotten*: it is personally His alone. It is not

here "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them." In John xvii. we get both ends, so to speak, of His glory; for in one sense He takes His glory again as man. But there is an aspect of His glory in which none can partake with Him.

He dwelt among us *full* of grace and truth, and of *His* fulness have we received. I cannot say I am full of grace and truth; I have received of Him. We get the same thing that is in Him, but in a derived way. He is the source and centre, and we shall always see something in Him far above us, and which will give the heart delight. The nearer we get to Christ the more shall we see this. There is, however, something more for us than even sharing His glory—we shall be *like* Him when we *see* Him as He is. I see *then* the glory and blessedness in which I am found in Him. What I have is His, and therefore I value and bless Him.

We are partakers of the divine nature, but we are not divinity. There are two Greek words used for the divine nature,

θεότης and *θειότης*. The former really means divinity, and applies to Christ alone; the latter is such as may be used of us—godlike, divine. I could not say that in me dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead (*θεότης*) bodily, it would be blasphemy; but Christ could, because He was *θεότης*. I can, however, say I have the divine nature (*θεία φύσις*) by faith. But this is very different from Godhead. As Son He was divine (*θεότης*). This is seen in the transfiguration where we see the two glorified ones in the same glory as Christ, but directly there is a thought of classing them essentially together, then there is a testimony to His divine nature, and the other two disappear. It is a very important thing to see clearly the difference between the divine nature in us and in Christ; we shall find the word of God very clear and exact on this point. I must have the nature of Christ to understand divine things, and to partake of His glory; but I must distinguish between His nature and His person, for when I get to His person He stands essentially and entirely

alone. "We beheld," i.e., they apprehended that Christ was before them as a Son from His Father. This does not so much refer to what the apostles apprehended in His lifetime on earth, when they were dull; but is their apprehension of what they saw as they looked back upon it by the help of the Holy Ghost, and understood what it was they really did see. Before the Holy Ghost came they had not true apprehensions of it. The whole life of Christ was a moral manifestation of His glory. Even the miracles in John are presented as manifesting His glory, and this glory was the glory of the only-begotten of the Father. The miracles of Christ have a very deep character, there are heaps of things to be noticed of them. There was in them something more than the outward act of power—even divine grace and love to man in his lost and ruined condition. There are also Christ's character and spirit to be seen in them. This is most remarkably seen in His raising the son of the widow of Nain, and still more at the grave of Lazarus.

Ver. 17. We get contrast here. The law was given by Moses: it was not sent—it was given. A person comes. When God did not come, He gave a law. Law is not a revelation of God's character: it is absurd to apply it thus to God. It is not a transcript of God's character, but of the creature's character. How can "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" apply to God? He has no neighbour. Law expresses the perfection of the creature—not God. If it were fulfilled on earth, we should have a heaven upon earth. Christ even was not simply perfect according to the law, but a great deal more—He loved sinners. Giving oneself up for others is not loving my neighbour as myself merely, but better than myself. I am bound as a creature to love my neighbour as myself; but Christ was not bound to die for sinners. As a Christian I have to act as He acted. What He did went much further than the law. Still He came to do God's will. "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." Hence all that will became duty to Him. So

with us. We are creatures, and as creatures we owe it to God to do all that His love requires of us. It is quite wrong to be afraid of the word commandments. God has His commandments for His children to keep, so also has Christ. It is not law in the scriptural sense, but still it is commandment. Love is the fulfilling of the law; and therefore if I love I do not want law, but I do want commandment, the expression of God's will. Christ was not a lawgiver, although He gave commandments. Moses was the lawgiver—law came by him. We have to do with obedience, but not with law. I do not call my Father a lawgiver, although He gives me commandments and I obey them. I am subject to Him. So the saints are under subjection to Christ.

Grace and truth came by a person—Jesus Christ. Here we get a perfect contrast. Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ—by a person. In fact, God Himself came and brought grace and truth. The law is given to me to pre-

scribe a line of conduct by which I learn what my duty is, and it claims judgment; but Christ comes when law has been broken, and judgment must be condemnation, and He brings with Him grace and truth. Truth is not judgment, although it leads us to judge ourselves. The truth comes *about* something. So in this case. The devil and man looked very amiable until Christ came and put matters in the right light—brought in the truth. I must not forget this, the truth is *about something*. Now when the truth comes it is with grace, otherwise it would upset us; and it is an immensely important fact that truth and grace are come. If I have Christ I have everything needed for the knowledge of God, of Satan, of man, and of the state of my own soul, and I have perfect grace with it. The truth itself is not here the question, as that is abstract, still Christ was the truth. Yet the truth is something about another thing. God is not the truth, but the One from whom the truth comes.

(To be continued.)

A SERIES.

No. 10.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH.

Having considered the constitution of the Church, let us now examine the testimony committed to it, remembering in the first place that the Church is a unique body, singular and unconnected with any divine system preceding it. From not clearly apprehending this great fact, the door was opened to the introduction of many things from the Mosaic economy which eventually were insisted on with the weight of divine authority. The Church was not in existence save in the purpose of God until the resurrection of Christ; but God was not without a people. Israel was His earthly family, but quite distinct from this new body—the Church—called into existence after the resurrection of Christ. Now the eleven apostles belonged to, and had the hopes of, this earthly family; and yet we know that the Church was “built on the foundation of the apostles

and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone;" and we shall see as we proceed how, while belonging to both, they passed from the one to the other, so to speak.

The commissions given to the apostles embody and set forth to us all the varieties and character of the testimony incumbent on the Church, so we shall do well to consider them. I propose to divide them into three orders, premising this, that each of the orders being then incumbent on the Church is so still; nor can the people of God evade the responsibility which they are placed under by the truth committed to them through the apostles. I distinguish the three orders thus:—

1. The commission given to the eleven.
2. The commission given to Paul.
3. The commission given to John.

Or this, the truth committed to it through the apostles, the Church is responsible and ought to be the witness.

In the commission given to the eleven (Matt. xxviii.) there were two parts; the one relating to the world at large,

viz., "Go ye into all nations and disciple them, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;" the other relating to the instruction of the disciples, viz., "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you to the end of the age." Now the terms of this commission are binding on the Church. It is true that the eleven at first confined their testimony to Israel; in their own land too, and this was only consistent with the promises of God to them; for the apostles were natural branches of the olive-tree, (the vessel of testimony for God on earth which Israel hitherto had been. See Rom. xi.) and therefore they testified in the land of the olive-tree of the title of the rejected Christ to the kingdom of God on earth. But instead of the nation as a whole receiving this testimony, some only—"such as were ordained unto eternal life"—received it; and thus the effect of the testimony was ecclesiastical and not national; for "believers were added to the Church,

and continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They with unity of purpose and heart maintained the testimony set forth by the apostles; they owned the title of their absent Lord, and were waiting for Him to come and reign. This was the unanimous and happy testimony of the believers gathered out of Israel; the effect of this testimony declared the purpose of God, whatever was the amount of the apostles' intelligence on the subject; for souls were drawn out of the mass and gathered into one company, baptized into one body by the Holy Ghost, and that was the Church. The apostles were the natural branches and their testimony was one becoming the natural branches; but when the nation finally rejected the testimony at the death of Stephen, the concentration of it is broken up, it is carried beyond Judea; and the judicial excision of the natural branches of the olive-tree is begun.

THEN it is that we get the second commission. Saul of Tarsus, the wit-

ness of his nation's guilt in slaying Stephen, is now introduced into the presence of Jesus in the glory, and hears from Him *there*, that He is identified with His suffering saints on earth, and is *then and there* commissioned to be a minister and a witness of the things he had seen, and of the things in the which the Lord would appear unto him. Now those things which Saul had seen, constituted the gospel of the glory of Christ. To him is announced that not only was the glory with Christ Himself the place where Christ's rejected members like Stephen would be received, but that in the glory, the sinner was now to make his first acquaintance with the glorified Christ. The glory with Christ was to be the starting point of the saved sinner, as well as the end and goal of the martyred saint. And when the light of life first dawned on the soul of Saul of Tarsus, even then, was the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus at the end of his course. And besides this, Saul was to be a minister and a

witness of the things in the which the Lord would appear unto him. Doubtless the place of the saints in heaven, in the peculiar relation of a body to Him the Head, was among the things in the which the Lord appeared unto him, and they are distinctly detailed to us in the epistle to the Ephesians.

It is evident that the testimony, after the call of Saul of Tarsus, is of a different order. Before his call, Christ's title to the kingdom, and heirship founded on His resurrection, and a waiting for His return in the day of His power, was the first testimony. To this was added at the death of Stephen, that the glory where Jesus was, would receive them whom the world rejected, because they testified of the glory of the ascended Jesus; and this was coincident with the death of Stephen, for the resources of grace were unfolded as the violence of man exposed itself; but from that moment the judicial excision of the natural branches had set in. The testimony of the eleven, however, still continued; and if the natural

branches were broken off, it was that others—wild ones—should be grafted in, who would do—mark! *what the natural branches had failed to do in the country and soil, if I may say, of the olive-tree.* The saints who had been gathered out before the death of Stephen would not have relaxed or deviated from their faith in the title and coming of Jesus, or from the expression of it (which is testimony), because the glory where Jesus was, was shewn to be the place of the rejected witness whom the nation of Israel would not suffer to live or testify in their land. Nor again, were these same saints distracted from their first faith and testimony because Paul discloses to them that the glory with Jesus is the beginning of a sinner's acquaintance with Him, as Stephen had shown that in the same glory was the end of it. These souls, far from relaxing their faith in Christ's title to the kingdom and of His coming in power to reign, were only greatly established therein as well as edified, by the new disclosures made to them through Stephen and

Paul. There was nothing lost or revoked of the truth already committed to the Church, and which comprised its testimony; for according to the truth committed, so was the testimony. To Peter also was it now revealed that the distinction between common and unclean, which a Jew maintained, was not observed in heaven with God. *There* all, (common or unclean according to earthly standing) were on an equality. It was not a question of *place* but of *rank* which was disclosed and determined by the vision to Peter; and he, thus instructed, is sent to preach to the Gentiles, with this additional truth—even equality of rank, belonging to his testimony. But to Paul was committed the *place* of the saints (and this we shall find in his epistle to the Ephesians) as none other but in heaven with Christ; and, moreover, that they are there in the peculiar relationship to Him of a body to a Head; in a word, the second part of the commission to Paul. “Even those things in the which I will appear unto thee,” is there declared. Even the

scope and range of the grace of God to the Church; and we are told that the power which wrought in Christ and raised Him from the dead, works in us to effectuate in us with Him what has been accomplished in Him, the fountain of life and power. And consequently the apostle presses on the saints "to walk worthy of their vocation." It is most important for us to remember and zealously to maintain that every truth committed to the Church is by grace in the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus; and, therefore, if we are members of His body, the Church, the grace of life in us must instinctively reach out after the truth belonging to it officially and naturally; and we must have in us the elements of power which would enable us to be witnesses of what has been committed to the Church. I do not say that we should have equal power in the times of declension, and failure, and ruin, as in the days of the Church's vigour and first estate; but I maintain that the *same* grace is available for me, the feeblest member in the darkest day,

as for any in the brightest days of the Church; the only difference being that the grace is not so strong or so developed in me as in my elder brethren. The instincts are the same; and though I have a confusion to contend with which they knew nothing of, and which hampers and thwarts me at every turn; yet if I walk truly, be this the darkest day, in that grace which in ages to come the Church shall testify of, and by which each member is now introduced into the blessings of life and relation to our Lord Jesus Christ, I must have, in and through that grace, whether I understand it or not, the elements, virtues, and instincts, which essentially belong to it. No saint has a right to say, "I cannot be a testimony," though he may sorrowfully admit that he is a very feeble one; but the reason of this is that he is so weak in grace. "Make the tree good and the fruit shall be good." In the grace given to the Church is the power to testify; but the testimony can only be in proportion to the grace; the external expression can truly

be only in accordance with the standard metal within. Every one is a testimony according to his grace ; and if the grace were developed in each soul according to the instincts imparted to it of God, because of our relationship to Christ, we should certainly testify distinctly of the truth committed to the Church. There can be no question that it was so in the early Churches. The expression of the truth became feeble when the Church by alliance with the world and union with unbelievers, disqualified itself for the expression or testimony which depended entirely on an inward spiritual grace.

Forms were adopted in order to retain a semblance of the testimony or expression of that which became the Church ; but so totally impossible is it to imitate life except by life, that even the public acts of the Church, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, lost their true meaning, and though retained in form with great tenacity, yet they are now so diverted and perverted from their first meaning, that they do not express a

feature of the scriptural institution. And not only this; human aid in the way of learning was called in to supply the felt need of spiritual instruction, and before long the Church lost the idea of its peculiar and unique calling, and borrowed from the Jewish economy, not only forms and doctrine, but became a state system: "of the earth, earthly." So that the Church, as the body of Christ, built on Him, consequent on his resurrection, the witness of his rejection and coming again, was no where recognisable.

True, there arose reformers from time to time; but, though godly men, (and, no doubt, the grace in them was dissatisfied,) they never regained in doctrine the true position of the Church as with Christ in heaven. They did not take a true spiritual standing; and though they preached justification by faith, and, in later years, the presence of the Holy Ghost, yet they never saw themselves set apart with Christ in a new creation, as citizens of heaven; or that they had no earthly place, nor hope

respecting earth during the rejection of its Lord. Those reformers broke from the worldly trammels of a state religion, but they never discovered the heavenly place of the Church; and, therefore, with their best intentions, their testimony was defective, and their position on earth so occupied them, that they had to invent systems and government for themselves. And still more, they in doctrine rarely escaped from the law; for though they preached grace, yet, not seeing clearly that they were "dead to the law by the body of Christ," they did not reckon themselves to be dead before God, and consequently the law still addressed them, "for the law hath power over a man so long as *he* liveth."

Now the Apostles Paul, Peter, and Jude, who lived in the first days of the Church, foresaw the coming ruin, and their counsel to the saints we may divide into three headings:

1st. They were to maintain the truth committed to them after the example of Daniel, who, though in Babylon, and Jerusalem in ruins, prayed three times a

day looking toward Jerusalem. At all costs, they must continue in the things they have learned; they must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered;" and they should have these things always in remembrance. No excuse, no palliation—no matter what the condition of ruin into which the Church had sunk—for remission or neglect of the truth committed to them.

2ndly. Separation from defiling associations is insisted on as the only *door* of escape. Because in the great and widespread ecclesiastical laxity, the faithful one finds himself associated and in communion with the impious and profane, and he must therefore purge himself from these vessels of dishonour and associate with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Tim. ii. 21.) Or, as Jude puts it—"Building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Or, as Peter—"Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

Lastly. The coming of the Lord—being with Him in the appearing; (2 Thess. ii. 1.;) waiting for the crown of righteousness in the day of His appearing; (2 Tim. iv. 8;) or, preserved unto His heavenly kingdom; (2 Tim. iv. 18;) is presented as the only sure rest and hope of the heart. So in Peter—“The power and coming of his majesty;” and in Jude—“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, as already awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” In a word, when the failure and declension of the Church were before the minds of the apostles, what they pressed was, the maintenance of the truth—separation from all evil associates — and a simple and eager waiting for the Lord’s presence and power.

I have now only to notice the third commission, the last order of testimony, committed to John, which I shall do briefly. We have traced the commissions to the other apostles and to Paul, in

which were revealed the truths that would edify the saints unto a knowledge of God's purpose and calling, and therefore necessarily demanded of them to be expressive of the same, because they were by the power of such truths enabled to do so. We have seen that the purpose of each revelation was to confirm the saints, and as they were confirmed, they testified of God's grace in a world which had rejected the Lord of life and power. We have glanced at the history of the Church from its rise until the whole mystery of its great and exalted relation to Christ in heaven is unfolded through the Apostle Paul; and we have seen how soon failure and corruption crept in, and how the saints are admonished to act when the house of God was no longer a testimony of the light and truth committed to it. But in the commission to John, as recorded in the Revelation, we have something still further made known to the Church; for in that book quite a new era is presented to us. Light is given of God in order that I should escape from the

darkness; and as I do, I am a witness of the light. In the Revelation the Church is presented as sinking to the state of final removal. It is seen there first threatened with the deprivation of its great function as Christ's candlestick on earth; (chap. ii. 5;) and at last as spued out of his mouth. (chap. iii. 16.) Now I do not think that this was revealed before John's time. He, let us remember, was a natural branch of the olive-tree, and to him is shown the wild, grafted-in branches in utter failure as to answering to the trust reposed in them, and still further, to him it is revealed that the trust would be recalled, and the Church set aside as no longer to be seen on earth, and all that pretended to it (now become Babylon) would eventually be swept from the earth, and that at length the green olive would be planted in the house of our God, the natural branches grafted in again on their own olive-tree. The testimony constituted by, or derived from, the Revelation amounts to this, that the faithful seek the place of overcomers, as we see that all the blessings promised

to the seven churches are conferred on the overcomers only. This testimony was a new one for the saints, and one indicating the state into which the house of God had sunk. But more than this: they were to know and maintain that the Lord walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, as represented in Rev. i.; that personal knowledge of Himself suited to the need of any assembly could alone afford strength and guidance to any to be overcomers, and connected also with this fact; that this especial ministry should be communicated, not necessarily through gifts, as the Church in her first state had known, but *angelically*, i. e., by *ἄγγελος** or special messenger; and finally is disclosed the fearful end and doom of Christendom, the manifestation of the

* This seems to be the most consistent view of the *angels* of the churches, that they represent ministry generally under Christ, and that not so much in the way of abiding gift as being near enough to Christ in devoted faithfulness to enter into His thoughts and mind. Hence, whoever did this would at the time be Christ's *ἄγγελος* or bearer of His message.—ED.

Church in her millennial glory and the glory of Christ consummated on the earth.

What a fine and blessed testimony for the faithful, even though as to the structure of the house of God, the carved work was broken down with axes and hammers, and that which should have been a lowly plant on earth should now in its wide-spreading branches lodge the denizens of the air!

May our God give us grace to see and own the large and wondrous truths which He has unfolded to His Church, as to her own proper standing because of His grace; and may each godly member know and feel in himself that the grace acknowledges responsibility to the whole range of truth committed; and that as he has grace, he is witness even individually of its power and principles, never admitting that he is irresponsible, though he may be feeble, and therefore expressing only according as he has grace, and assuming nothing beyond it; for we are not called to forms and ceremonies, but to power. And withal, may

we see how far we have fallen from the Church's true estate, and not *fear* to see it. The one who honestly aims at any elevation shrinks not from surveying the ascent. In fine, let us see what we are called to, and may we adhere to the divine admonitions for the day of declension, seeing our place to be that of overcomers to the last for His name's sake.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Continued from page 352.)

When the Word came—Christ—He brought the truth about everything with Him—it was in Himself—He was the Truth, what He said thoroughly made known what He was. In Him I get the truth about God, about man, about myself, and about Satan. The error with which Professor Maurice set out was confounding the truth with God.

There is another thing—rectitude of heart and the truth always go together.

This is seen in Christ, who was Himself the Truth—it was in Him—and He was it; but we must always know in part. In Christ alone was there perfect reality, sincerity; and we have sincerity in so far as we have Him. Where Christ is not there is no sincerity—that is reality. There may be what men call sincerity, where the heart is dark, and has been badly taught; but in this case there cannot be reality, for the truth only is *real*. There may be ignorance, but ignorance may be culpable, for it might have been prevented. It was the case with the Jews: they remained ignorant of Christ, because of the state they were in; hence He said, “They had both seen and hated him and his Father.” Yet in grace he prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they *know not* what they do.” So Peter says, “Brethren, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as also did your rulers;” but surely this ignorance was highly culpable, however sincere they may have been in it. Paul also said that what he did against Christ was done in ignorance and unbelief; but

he does not palliate, but himself confesses that he was the chief of sinners. Yet in his natural state he was sincere as men speak—following his conscience.

It is impossible that the truth can be separated from the grace in this verse, because it was God revealing Himself in Christ. God is love; therefore, if God revealed Himself there must be grace. Truth given without Christ coming personally would be judgment. God may give a law without revealing Himself, but directly He says "Come," then grace and truth must come out. The evangelist puts grace first, because doubtless he felt it was what really suited his own case. After the death of Christ grace reigns.

Ver. 18. Here we get Christ as *the* only-begotten Son. It is not, He *was* in the bosom of the Father, as though He had left it, but, "is in the bosom of the Father." There He is even when upon earth, and even upon the cross it was true. He was always in the nearness of intimacy indicated by the expression, "in the bosom of the Father."

On the cross He was, of course, not *enjoying* this relationship, but bearing wrath. The expression, "from the bosom of the Father," is rather inexact, for Christ never left the bosom of the Father. The passage, "Son of man which is in heaven" connects the manhood with the divinity; the Son was in heaven, and that Son was a man upon the earth, therefore might it be said, "Son of man in heaven."

On the cross, Christ was under wrath, and therefore—although He was then doing something on account of which the Father would in a very especial sense love Him—yet then He could not be enjoying the relationship between Him and His Father. In one sense, the Father never loved the Son so much as when He was upon the cross. This was what was in the Father's mind, not what was in Christ's, who could not be enjoying His relationship and drinking the cup of wrath at the same time. He gave Himself up to drink this cup. On the cross He was entirely occupied in bearing the wrath: it required a divine

person really to apprehend infinitely what the wrath of God was. I apprehend that at that time Christ was fully occupied with what He was bearing—infinite pain—which He infinitely realized. God was to be glorified on account of sin, and only such a One as He could do it. Still it is a very deep mystery, and it becomes us to be very careful in speaking about it. We find, however, that the time Christ was upon the cross was most distinctly clouded. There is a period before the three hours of darkness and a period afterwards, when Christ on the cross uses the term "Father." He does not use it during the three hours of darkness: during this time He appears to be entirely occupied with God—bearing wrath; everything is shut out but what was passing between Him and God. It is exceedingly terrible this three hours of darkness. It is this terrible character of bearing wrath which makes it so dreadful to think, that in His life Christ was bearing wrath. Christ sympathises with the judgment He was bearing, feeling

that it was right. See Psalm xxii. Christ really bore this wrath before His death, and when it was all done He gave up His life. After the bitter cry—My God, why hast thou forsaken me!—we see Him calmly giving up His spirit to His Father. The depth of death, looked at as the wages of sin, had been gone through during the hours of darkness. We see first, all man's wickedness in His crucifixion fully brought out; then darkness—darkness and wrath—God forsaking Him. Afterwards, having borne this wrath, He comes out and occupies Himself in fulfilling the rest of the scripture which had to be fulfilled in His death. The expression, "It is finished," shows us that just then He was departing because everything was done. It was a most blessed time for Him, for the bitterness of death was past—He was going to Paradise. He must actually die in order that the blood and water might come out for us. We never could enter into what Christ entered into upon the cross, therefore it was that He went through it *for* us.

We have no revelation of what He passed through during the three hours of darkness: we could not understand it, it was between Him and God alone.

In John's Gospel we never get Jesus dying, as it were, but simply His going out of the world to His Father. In John we get a divine person acting for us; in the other gospels, a man suffering for us.

His dying bodily was the giving effect to all that He did, in order to make it accessible to us.

He hath declared Him—not revealed. The word here used *ἐξηγέομαι* implies rather more detail. It is the same word which occurs in Luke for relations, and means to tell, narrate, recount, make known. It is a different word to that used in chapter xvii. 26, "I have *de-clared* unto them thy name and will *declare* it." In verse 18 of our chapter the word is used in the sense of relating what He knew of the Father. It would, perhaps, be better here to say, "Of the bosom of the Father," than "In the bosom of the Father." This verse closes

the revelation of what Christ was. Now in verse 19 we get into history. Verse 15 is a parenthesis concerning the Baptist's testimony to Christ, who comes after John as to His appearance in the flesh, but is preferred before him, has the precedence of him, because He was before him. John distinctly apprehends this. Verse 16 should be read in connection with verse 14.

Ver. 19—28. We have here the Baptist's testimony as to his own position, and as to what Christ was. This carries us up to end of verse 28.

Ver. 29—34. The Baptist here says, "Behold the Lamb of God which *taketh* away the sin of the world." He does not say *has taken* away. The expression is abstract, and represents the entire bearing of Christ's work before God. Everything that God does now, it is in respect of sin; whether it be grace or judgment, it is in respect of sin. Well, the result of Christ's work will be that all will be totally changed, sin will be gone, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth

righteousness ; that is, Christ will be found to have taken away the sin of the world ; for as the result of His work all God's dealings will be founded upon righteousness. The full effect of this will not be seen in the millennium, for then there will be sin to be dealt with, but not in the new heavens and earth. " Taketh away " has not in this verse the sense given in the margin of our Bibles—" *Beareth away.*" It is not a sacrificial term. It has been said by some that on account of what Christ has done no man will be condemned for sin as such, but because he did not believe in Christ. This is totally false, for God will judge men for sins. Christ said, " If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall *die in your sins.*" The other doctrine is the result of trying to make God agreeable to sinners instead of sinners agreeable to God.

(*To be continued.*)