

THE
PRESENT TESTIMONY,
AND
Original Christian Witness Revived.
IN WHICH
THE CHURCH'S PORTION
AND
THE HOPE OF THE KINGDOM,
ETC.
ARE SOUGHT TO BE DEVELOPED FROM SCRIPTURE.

לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אִם־בְּרוּחַי

Zechariah iv. 6.

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THE PRESENT TESTIMONY,

ETC., ETC.

N^o. I.

I TIMOTHY.

THE Epistles to Timothy and Titus have naturally a peculiar bearing and character, being addressed to persons deputed by the apostle to act in his name, or to care for the Churches during his absence. Their application to us is none the less direct on this account, because they not only instruct us with regard to the state of the Church and the pastoral care which the apostle bestowed on it, but the line of conduct in which Timothy is charged to lead the faithful, is that which the faithful ought always themselves to follow. Nevertheless, to confound the directions given to Timothy and Titus, with the words addressed immediately to the faithful, would be to cast confusion upon ministry in its best sense.

A great part of this first epistle to Timothy requires but little development; not because it is without importance, but because it contains directions—so plain and simple, that explanation would be superfluous,—and practical exhortations which would only be obscured, and their force and point taken away, by attempting to enlarge upon them.

On the other hand, some general principles of great importance for the position of the Church in general, are contained in this epistle.

God assumes here, in a peculiar way, the character of a Saviour God, with regard to the world: a principle of

The apostle concludes his exhortation to Timothy, by engaging him to warn the rich not to rest on the uncertainty of riches, but on the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. It is still the supreme and Creator God who is before our eyes. Moreover, they were to be rich in good works, and ready to give: to be rich in those dispositions which would be of value, which would lay up a store (this is but a figure) against the time to come; and to lay hold of eternal life. The apostle repeats his urgent exhortation to Timothy to keep that which had been committed to him, to avoid profane and vain babblings, holding fast the sound and sanctifying truth, and to have nothing to do with oppositions of human science, which pretended to penetrate into divine things as though they were subject to its knowledge. This was the origin of the fall of many, with regard to Christian faith.

I do not doubt that in the manner in which the apostle here sets God before us, he refers to the foolish imaginations to which, under the influence of the enemy, men were abandoning themselves. Thus he speaks of these with relation to the majesty of His Being as the one only God in whom is all fulness, and with regard to the sobriety of practical morality, which keeps the heart under the influence of that truth, and apart from the false and vain speculations in which the pride of man indulged itself. He maintained souls by the majesty of the only God, in the practical sobriety in which peace dwells.

Soon will the veil be drawn aside by the appearing of Jesus, whom the Almighty God will display to the world.

FRAGMENT.

“Sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. i. 15). Had, ever, any other man such occasions as Saul? Jesus, killed on earth, had, from heaven, sent down the Holy Ghost. The Jews reject grace from Christ in heaven and the Holy Ghost sent down to earth too. And when they stone Stephen, the heavens being opened on him,—the young men lay down their garments at Saul’s feet. It whetted his soul to go and persecute the Church! Yet Christ came to save such.

N^o. II.

THOUGHTS ON VARIOUS TEXTS.

I.—THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK.

Exodus xxi. 5, 6; and Psalm xl. 6-8.

“IF the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his Master shall bring him unto the Judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his Master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever” (Ex. xxi. 5, 6). In this passage, we see, in the case of the Hebrew servant whose ear was *bored through with an awl* in token of his engagement to serve his Master for ever, the principle of willing loving obedience; and this is commonly, and rightly, I believe, thought to explain the following word of Christ in Ps. xl., “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; *mine ears hast thou opened, or digged* (see *margin*): burnt offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.”—The truth is, our blessed Lord himself was the antitype of the Hebrew servant of Ex. xxi., devoted as he was to God’s service, the one who offered Himself as a victim, to die on the cross for the redemption of sinners. This, then, being the case, may we not gather from hence, what “*volume*” it is of which the Psalmist here speaks? To my mind it is a simpler idea than is commonly thought. “THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK,” wherein these things are written of Christ, I believe to be, not the volume of the eternal counsels of God, as some have supposed, but THE BOOK OF THE LAW, bearing reference, as it typically does in this Ex. xxi., to our blessed Lord, as the only Hebrew servant who ever did, or ever could, without imperfec-

tion or failure, do the will of his Master, within whose heart the law of God was, whose love to His God and Father was such, as to lead Him to give Himself up, without any reserve, to serve Him for ever.

2.—WRATH AND DOUBTING.

“I WILL therefore that men (or *the men*) pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. ii. 8). The Apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, begins the Epistle whence this passage is quoted, with *grace*. Contending with those who were upholding the *law*, he speaks of himself, blasphemer and persecuter as he had been, as a signal example of this—of the *Grace of God to poor sinners, without any distinction as to nation or name* (1 Tim. i. 3—18). Next, he exhorts, because of this outflow of love to the world, that supplications, prayers, and intercessions, giving of thanks, should henceforth be made for *all*, and no longer confined, as in the times of the law, to the Holy Land and the Temple. “*Everywhere*” prayer was to be made (1 Tim. ii. 1—8). Thus we have the clue to the closing words of the above passage, “*without wrath and doubting;*” here the Apostle evidently glances at two distinct states of mind, which, in the case of disciples *born under the law, and still cleaving thereto*, would, in a measure, hinder their sympathy with such a precept as this; “WITHOUT WRATH”—here he hints at the natural opposition of the Jewish mind to the thought of God, showing grace to the Gentiles, as seen in 1 Thes. ii. 16, “Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved.” “AND DOUBTING”—Observe how in Acts x., we have an example of this, I mean of one born a Jew, even Peter, not exactly *opposing*, but *doubting*, in the case of Cornelius, the goodness of God in converting the Gentiles, and then, mark, on the other hand, how the Lord meets, and sets aside, his misgivings, on the occasion of Cornelius sending for him to teach him the truth, “The Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, *doubting nothing.*” (Acts x. 19, 20).

3.—THE PASCHAL EVENING ANTICIPATED.

THE Passover, according to the Levitical law, was kept by the Jews on the *fourteenth day* of the first month, at even. It is evident, however, that Christ, in the especial year that he suffered, *anticipated the day of this feast*; that He and His disciples kept it together *the evening before*, at the close of the *thirteenth day*. If it be asked, How He came to do this, and whether, in thus altering the time, He was not breaking the law, which even He, as a Son of Abraham, was bound to obey; we answer, that He was also the Jehovah of Israel, and therefore that He had full title to set aside the law as He pleased. In this case, however, while He seemed to be *transgressing*, He was in reality *keeping*, it, that is *antitypally* doing so, inasmuch as He Himself was the *true Paschal Lamb*, so that by this arrangement on His part as to the feast, He was offered up on the *fourteenth day*, the day appointed by Moses. Thus the *type* and the *antitype* met, so that, while the nation, lost and degraded, as they were, were merely observing a powerless ordinance, the faithful among them (though not as yet realizing it themselves, it is true), were spiritually feeding on Him who had already died for their sins, and who was at that solemn moment of darkness in Israel, lying dead in the sepulchre.

And now, in proof that the day was thus changed, I cite the following passage. "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas, unto the hall of judgment; and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but *that they might eat the passover*" (John xviii. 28). Then again we read, "And it was the *preparation of the passover*, and about the sixth hour, and He saith unto the Jews, Behold your King" (John xix. 14). Now, here the passover is spoken of as *not eaten as yet by the Jews*, but as that for which they were *making preparation*, whereas, as we know, *Christ had eaten it already, even before his betrayal*. This then explains the following passage, "Now *before the feast of the Passover*, when Jesus knew that His hour was come,

that He should depart out of this world unto the Father; having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. And *supper being ended*, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and girded himself, etc." (John xiii. 1—4). Here, observe, that it was *after the Paschal supper eaten by Himself and the twelve*, but at the same time *before the feast kept by the Jews*, that He rose from the table in order to serve His disciples. Thus we see how a comparison between the three above passages, namely, John xiii. 1—4.; xviii. 28.; xix. 14.; clearly establishes the fact, that Christ acted in this case in the sovereignty of His own power, in thus changing the day with a view to the fulfilment of the eternal counsels of God as to the time of His death.^a

4.—THE GREATER SIN.

"THEN saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John xix. 10, 11). "*The greater sin*," here referred to, of which Israel was guilty, in delivering Jesus to Pilate, was that of making use of the power of the Gentiles, in carrying out their designs against the Lord's life. Had they, as they ought to have done, received him as their Messiah, their King, then Cæsar, and Pilate, his representative in Judea, would have been deprived of that power which at the time of the Babylonish Captivity, had been given from

^a If the command as to the passover, "Thou shalt kill it in the evening" (Ex. xii. 6), is rendered more correctly by the marginal reading:—"Thou shalt kill it between the two evenings;" then the whole 24 hours were open to the killing. בֵּין הָעַרְבַּיִם certainly looks like "*between the two evenings*," rather than "toward the evening;" and such at least is a tradition.—ED.

above to the Gentiles; and Israel, as the people of God, would have recovered their proper place in the earth. But instead of this, they enlisted the power of Cæsar against Him. Hence the authority was still left in the hands of the Gentiles, to be used at this critical juncture in fulfilling God's purpose as to the crucifixion of Christ, so that Pilate, however presumptuously, [yet, in a certain sense,] could with truth say to Jesus, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee." In all this, we see how this unhappy people were sunk in iniquity. They hated the Just one, they plotted His death, and, more than this, they delivered Him up to the Gentiles, the enemies of God, the oppressors of Israel, those from whose yoke the Lord came to save them. Had it been otherwise, Pilate could have had no power against him; but as it was, that which had been originally given from above to the Gentiles was now to be used on the side of the enemy. In all this, then, we see a fearful *aggravation of Israel's guilt*, "*the greater sin,*" of which they were guilty—*greater than if they had themselves, without the aid of the Gentiles, put him to death.* Of this it is that Jesus accuses the nation, or rather, Caiaphas, the High Priest, their adviser and leader in the act of rejecting the Lord, and casting Him into the hands of His murderers.^b

5.—LOVE TAKING THOUGHT FOR THE WEAK.

"PRAY ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day" (Matt. xxiv. 20). As to this passage, observe, that to take flight in the *winter* would be trying to the body, while to fly on the *sabbath day*, being a breach of the Levitical law, would bring guilt and distress on the *consciences* of those whom the Lord had in

^b Besides the aggravation of Israel's sin, as referred to above (viz. that for the Messiah to be there, and the power of the Gentiles to be *still* supreme, proved that Israel was in rebellion),—is there not a peculiar stress upon the fact, that God had put the sword, at first, into the hands of the Gentiles, as a proof of his displeasure against Israel? So that APPEAL NEVER would have been made to Cæsar about him if Israel had not sinned.—ED.

view in this chapter, namely the Jewish remnant during the great tribulation under the beast (Rev. xiii.). How considerate, therefore, in Him, how did it show His love, the deep and tender sympathy of His heart, at such a distance of time, to take thought in this *twofold way* for His suffering people, to counsel them, in such explicit terms, to pray that their *persons*, and at the same time their *consciences*, in those days of amazement and terror, might be sheltered from evil! How sweet, how encouraging may this be to us! Let the heart that quails at the prospect of suffering, let the sensitive conscience, take comfort. Here the Lord allows us to pray that that which we feel ourselves ill able to meet, because of weak faith, may be averted. True, we, as members of Christ; and as indwelt by the Spirit of God, have, in reality, power to rise above suffering of every kind. Still, in a passage like this, we see the condescension of love to the weak, the Lord's tender considerate care for the timid tempted disciple.

FRAGMENTS.

1. If the old Roman earth is to be formed again,— must not *Austria* be broken, so to speak, in half?

2. The great impeder of the Bible, has been *Austria*, with its old-world theory of “the Papacy and Superstition.” Should it master Sardinia, it will drive the Bible thence. Is *Infidelity*, and its theory of man's rights, better than *Superstition*, with its mandate of blind submission? Thank God! we have not, as Christians who have the word of God and His grace, to answer such questions. Yet God can use an Emperor and a Czar, if He wills (though *Infidelity* and man's rights be in the wake), to break the iron of a Kaiser's support of Superstition. Who shall say to Him: What doest THOU?

No. III.

ON FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER WITH CHRIST.

PART IX.

Glorified together with ;—
Reigning together with—Him.

THERE is sufficient connection between these two thoughts—Dominion and Glory—to incline the mind to look at them together. Let it, however, be remembered, that the Holy Ghost has not, in writing Scripture, been pleased to handle truths by subjects—taking (as man would have done) one topic after another, until all were severally considered; and giving each in a way as abstract, and, as internally perfect in itself, as possible. A creed or a confession made by man may so give us truth, or its skeleton, on dissection. What God reveals comes, on the contrary, instinct with Divine power and full of vital energy—and comes in the power of the associations which belong to it. Forgetfulness, or neglect of this, will lead to weakness and feebleness in the faith.

1. In Rom. viii. 17, we read, *ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν*, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be we suffer with him, *that we may be also glorified together [with Him].*”

The person of the Christ, as he now is in Heaven, is the very centre and regulator of the truth, given to us in this chapter: Christ up there; Christ in and before God—the present object of the faithful, as being witnessed of to them by the Holy Ghost: and their present position and standing; their privileges, experiences, calling, and hopes—all according to this blessed truth that they are looked upon by God as one with the Christ. Led by, as

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subjected to, the Spirit of God, they are sons of God. They know it; for the spirit which they have received is according to that position; it is not a spirit of bondage again to fear, but of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba! and the Holy Ghost bears witness, according to the word, to the same truth of the position of sons, which belongs to the new nature divinely given to us.

In the Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, the blessings of believers are often presented to us, according to the law of the relationship which exists; 1st, between Christ as the Head of a body, and the members of that body; and 2ndly, between Christ, as the second man, and His bride; blessings according to positions taken by the Son as the Christ and assigned to us. In the Epistle to the Romans,^a we are looked at more in our individuality of being: consequently, the whole question of sin in man, and in the individual, is more gone into in the Epistle to the Romans than in that to the Ephesians, and the blessing is according to a place assigned to us by God in His family, as placed there around the Christ, who is His Son. The nature given to us, and the place assigned to us in this new nature, correspond. We “were by nature the children of wrath” (Eph. ii. 3); we have been made “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. i. 4). Having the divine nature, we are (as we see in Rom. viii.) sons of God. For the Spirit of Christ (ver. 9, 10), “the Spirit of God who raised up Jesus from the dead,” as given to us to lead us, is the Spirit of sonship. We are sons of God (ver. 14); and *we know* the blessed position in which grace has thus set us, for we “have received the spirit of

^a In Romans we get man, and God's mode of dealing with man as a creature upon earth; though, it may be, for heaven. In Ephesians we have the heavenly man, and they that are heavenly; and in John's epistles, *the eternal life*, in its own self, looked at. The soul that is blessed has each of these portions for its own: and it needs instruction in them all. As each of them is divinely perfect, there is no possibility for a creature rightly to prefer the one to the other; although we may at one time the rather need instruction from one, and at another time instruction from the other.

On Fellowship together with Christ.

adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.” The position assigned to us is according to the nature given to us.

The blessing of this gift to us, as is shown in Rom. viii., is manifold. In it are found, through faith, in the work of Christ: 1st, complete deliverance from all that was against; and 2dly, complete introduction into a new world and life—a life, according to which (walking in the light of that other world into which we are brought) we can live to God, and serve Him in the spirit—though the body be dead because of sin. And what a blessedness to be a son of God; a son of God according to the pattern of the Christ. Not a son, as was Adam by creation; nor as was Israel, in the governmental arrangements of God upon earth; but a son by grace, through adoption, enabled, through ability given to us, to know that He, who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is also our God and Father; and able to say to Him in the energy and according to the new nature, Abba! Father. But, then, not only does the heart, instinct with the new nature, turn and say, in its confiding, happy, though peaceful joy, Abba! but “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (ver. 16). Yes; the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word, and all His divine actings as a living person toward us (in the care which, as the Paraclete, He has over us)—all bear witness that He recognises and owns us as the children of God. But what a place of holy safety, happy privilege, and amazing honour is this! We are already sons of God; already been called and named sons of God; and we know it; and we have hearts to enjoy it; and a sure witness greater than ourselves (through whom is the word, and from whom is every action, and impulse, and regulation of blessing) is acting as God the Comforter (or rather Paraclete, Guardian) towards us, caring for us all through our course, as those whose names are inscribed in the Book of Life, and whom He knows to be dear to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ. A relationship is above all its consequences, and contains more in it than all its consequences. To be a child of God, and to know it; to be owned now in such relationship, not only by

God and by Christ in heaven, but by the Spirit of God in the word and in all His personal and individual dealings towards me now, is a blessing which links me up to the living God in all the affections of His heart as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and this is a most precious joy to the heart. *But* the blessing stops not there. When God's fountain is open, His streams well forth, and each blessing has a tale of eternal fulness to tell; blessing from God never comes alone. So we read, ver. 17, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Such are the hopes which are inseparable from the adopted children. They belong to —they are called now to love as members in—a family which has a bright to-morrow. Redemption has an inheritance for Christ with God. He waits, who is the heir, for the inheritance—'tis God's inheritance as connected with redemption; 'tis ours, also, who, as now sons, have the hopes of the family of God—heirs of God—and co-heirs with Christ. Men have to wait until their fathers, loved in nature, are dead ere they can inherit, and many a heart would rather be without the inheritance and keep the parent. But when God takes in possession, together with His Christ, redemption-glory—we as sons shall be there, and we know that Himself now looks forward to it, for He has bidden us rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and more than this, He, the Christ, has given to us the glory which was given unto Him. Surely, apart from the inheritance itself and the mode of taking it, as associate with Christ, there is food divine in the love which thus gilds the Christian's horizon for him:—If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Indeed, that the association of us with Himself and with His Christ, is the very object of this portion, is plain. For He goes on: "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Christ: and no separation from Christ. Our hearts may well humble themselves as to the little practical association which we realize, *in suffering together with Christ*. The Lord Himself shew us mercy in this respect, and give us of that moral glory which filled His Son and may fill us, as it has done many Christians even

to the overflowing their small vessels; but that moral glory and character never can be, and shine out in a world like this, without suffering. The unselfishness of enlightened love, which seeks not its own but God's, and seeks, as to man, his blessing in that which is God's, cannot be here below without suffering. Let no one deceive himself as to this.

But, further, as the suffering together with Him *now* is the result of association in life with Him, for the life is not in harmony with the state either of our bodies or of the world around us; so, when the Lord of Life has displaced Satan from his usurped position, He will so change our bodies and bring them also into a sphere where all will be in accordance with Himself, and that life which we now possess, as that the glory of it then, shall be as natural a result of its being there, as sorrow now is of our being here. The life has its own moral glory peculiar to itself; of sympathy with God, and devotion to Him and His plans and ways. Shown it was perfectly in Christ, in humiliation; shown it will be, too, in all the eternal fulness of its source in Him, in redemption-glory. It is in us, and its moral glory can now be displayed in the fellowship of His mind here below; its native, intrinsic, moral glory will have a bright outshining hereafter; but the sweetest part of the portion to come will still be in that it is *together with Him*.

The glory here spoken of may, of course, be at first in connexion with the kingdom; but it is separable from the kingdom; for it outlasts it, and it is of wider scope. It is the display in glory of association with the Lord.

It is "the glory which shall be revealed in us" (ver. 18), as the Lord Himself said elsewhere — "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John xvii. 23). It is "the manifestation of the sons of God" (ver. 19) — "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (ver. 21). And on this bright hour, God has hung the hopes of creation (ver. 20), though no heart has the hope, sentiently and with intelligence, save the US, who, having received the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. This hope in the heart, divinely sus-

tained, being in accordance with that for which creation is kept by God, marks the character of our association, and the intelligence of the association, with the Christ which grace has given to us. We know with certainty of a glory, not yet seen, that is coming; and, therefore, "do we with patience wait for it" (ver. 25).

And then (ver. 26) the Spirit goes on to show the results of this present association *in life* with the Christ; association, which leads *now* to sorrow in the flesh and from the world, as also it gives the assurance of a *future* revelation in glory. But it has a heavenly side, which even now, at the present, is replete with blessing. For God ministers to us amid all our present infirmities, and they may be but the occasion of letting us into the exceeding grace of God. We have infirmities, weaknesses; and we do not know what we should pray for as we ought. This would be sorrowful, if the instruction stopped here. But it goes on to show how the Spirit, and Christ, and God, use the very present infirmities in us poor yet blessed ones, as the means to display the riches of grace. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (ver. 26, 27). And thus our very infirmities, instead of discouraging us, lead us to a better realising of the unsearchable preciousness of that life given to us, which is unsearchable by human ken in its sympathies now, in the range of its glory hereafter; and which, just when we realise infirmities, is the means of making us realise dependance, and the near, close watchfulness of God. We know also (ver. 28) our connection with the counsels of God, as turning all to our blessing, because (ver. 29) the end of that counsel is the glory of His Son as to be (not alone in redemption-glory, but) surrounded by many.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow

On Fellowship together with Christ.

He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (ver. 28, 29). Chief in joy He shall yet be, whose sorrows were beyond those of all others. But the counsel and the plan divine are, that He shall then not be alone in His joy and glory, but surrounded by many brethren. And so we read (ver. 30), "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

The concluding part of the chapter, in like manner, leads the mind not to dominion, but to association with Christ according to the mind of God.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who (can be) against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ver. 31—39).

Faith may scan the wondrous, vast revelation which is here given. Surely—yea, most surely—does it pourtray the blessedness of association with God and His Son, which is ours, as possessing the Spirit of Christ Jesus. He who sets our infirmities before us, to make us know our blessedness, here to silence us in wonder, causes the vision of His plan, and works, and care, to pass before

us; while His Spirit moves our hearts within to say,
What shall we say to these things?

II. *If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.*

2 Tim. ii. 12.

Moral character, relationship, and external manifestation hang together naturally and necessarily before God, whether in good or in evil. He that has usurped power in this world has a character (as of a liar and a murderer from the beginning), and all that is opposed to God may cluster round him and be under his sway. In man's day He may make darkness to pass for light, and light to pass for darkness; but a day is coming, even the day of the Lord and of God, when all shall be seen in its true colour, and be manifested accordingly. The Prince of Life, on the other hand, has a moral character of His own—in the perfection of sympathy with, and subjection to, all the good pleasure of God, He has relationships of the most blessed kind; and a time is coming in which not only shall He be owned, as now, on the Father's throne, though hidden there, but shall stand forth confessed as the Champion and the Victor, whom God delights to honour. His taking His power and reigning will be still in Servant-character. It is well, with such hearts as we have, to recall this to mind; for many a one looks forward to the day of power, without remembering that in that day the gift of power to us will not be the letting of self loose, but the expression of perfect exemption from all selfishness and self-seeking. The power of that day is the power of God and of the Lamb.

As in the Epistle to the Romans, the being glorified together with Christ brings out the blessedness of our association with Him, in all with which He will stand connected in that coming day; so this passage (2 Tim. ii. 12) brings out the truth, most important in its place, that, if now we are associates of Christ's, realising our weakness, and suffering from a rude rough world around,

On Fellowship together with Christ.

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as was Timothy, that the time draws near when power, and power of dominion, shall be ours. "We shall reign together with Him." For He that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, has made us unto God and His Father kings and priests; and we shall reign together with Him (Rev. i. 6). When He comes to put down His enemies, He will bring us with Him (Rev. ii. 26, 27). While He is putting them down, we shall be with Him (1 Cor. xv.).

And when He reigns, we shall reign together with Him (Rev. i. 6, and xxi.). As a stimulant to patient endurance under suffering, and to hardy, courageous warfare, nothing is better than for the soul, amid its sufferings, to bethink itself of the glory and power which awaits it. Only, as has been said before, let the thought of its being fellowship *together with the Christ*, whether in the suffering or in the glory, be that on which we are set. If we be in association with Him, no burden of sorrow, weakness, anguish, or suffering will be found too much for us, for He bears the burden of our load; and if our prospect is association with Him in glory and dominion, there is no fear of the heart's getting elated or puffed up. The glory is His, and our share of it, though it be an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, is His free gift to us; and the very greatness of it will, even in anticipation, if His person and presence is borne in mind, only humble our souls. Who or what am I, or what have I, or what can I do or be, that the Lord of all glory should have told me plainly, that when He takes His dominion and glory, and reigns, He means me to be there, as a sharer of that dominion and that glory together with Him?

FRAGMENT.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. . . . As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

N^o IV.

“THE HOUSE OF GOD.” — “THE BODY OF CHRIST.” — “THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST.”

YOU have asked of me some account of the historical development of a false notion on which I have often spoken, and already written, briefly, in the “Present Testimony.” The practical importance of this notion had caused my mind to be occupied with it, and led me to entertain the thought of pursuing its history. The false notion which I refer to, is the confusion of two distinct aspects of the Church, given us in scripture: that of the house of God, and that of the body of Christ. Since I first proposed treating this point, the subject has been taken up in the Bible Treasury. But, having the wish to go further into the statements of scripture than is there done, and, having long had my mind occupied with it, this does not hinder my pursuing it myself. The ground of the view there given, and of the following paper, I apprehend to be the same; but it will easily be seen how entirely independent they are one of another. The thought, that admission into the house conferred the privileges of the body, has been the root of the systematic corruption of Christianity, which has acquired the reverence of ages, was not shaken off at the reformation, and is now corrupting the Protestant systems, which were thought to have freed themselves from its fetters. — All the members of the body of Christ, are living members, quickened of the Spirit, or regenerate; they are forgiven all their sins, and perfected for ever by His one offering of Himself; have received His Spirit, and are heirs of the inheritance of glory. If the body and the house are the same thing, then all that are admitted into the house, be they adults or infants,

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have part in the privileges which belong to the body. On the other hand, being true members of the body of Christ, secures nothing; for its true members may perish.—The very idea of being born of God, is destroyed; for, after having been born of God, they lose what they had, and have to be born over again, without the alleged means of being so, or they enter the kingdom of heaven, as they say, without life; the abiding efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is annulled—for they that are sanctified, are not perfected for ever; and the sealing of the Holy Ghost for the day of redemption, is applied to those who will never be there, and has no effectual value in this respect. The first general idea, that of which we are to speak, is the Church. The word, however, I shall at once drop, and employ the literal rendering of the Greek word so translated: the Assembly. Technical words obtain a conventional meaning, which introduces great confusion into people's minds;—for, though the local growth of thought produces language, in moral education, words, become names, and create rather than express ideas. Take as an instance, this word *Church*. It is applied, as all know, to buildings appropriated to ecclesiastical services. But the church is the house of God; and the building is treated as the house of God, though God has expressly declared, that, under the Christian system, He will not dwell in temples made with hands; that where two or three are gathered together in His name—the true church, so far, and so called in the passage,—there Christ is in their midst.

I shall speak, therefore, of *the Assembly*, the real meaning of the word. Only this is God's Assembly. Take the passage which I have referred to, and see the effect of this. If a brother trespassed against another, he was to tell it to him alone; if that were useless, to take two or three more; if that failed, to tell it to the Assembly. What has not been made out of this passage? And how many delusions are dispelled by its plain and simple language, when it is taken as it stands? It is related, that King James forbade the translators of the Bible into English to change this word *Church*,

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which, in the previous Geneva translation, had been dropped. The bearing of such a prohibition, is evident enough.*

The word *Assembly*, is one known to Old Testament language and thought. Yet it had there a very different character and foundation. Two words are there employed, which, it seems to me, give somewhat different ideas, HEDAH and KAHAL. The former seems to me, to present rather the corporate unity of the congregation; the latter, the actual gathering; pretty much the difference which we might understand, between an *Assembly* and an *Assemblage*. MOED is another thought; the meeting, the tent of meeting; because there they met God, and, indeed, one another; but the thought in the word is *an appointed place of meeting*.

* In this and a few other cases, the charge of intentional departure from a plain translation, through prejudice, or a fear of doing mischief perhaps, cannot be escaped, in respect to the (generally-speaking) admirable translation which we possess in English. I know of none better, unless, perhaps, the Dutch, which, made about eight years afterwards, has evidently profited by the English; perhaps by Bengel's of the New Testament, which is done with very great care, but not in use. The reformed German translation of *Piscator*, is a very good one. It has, alas! even in the reformed churches, given place to Luther's, which is the very worst translation I know. The French are all very mediocre; Diodati's, the most exact, but old, and even incorrect French; but the truth is, that the French language is singularly unfitted for the translation of scripture. It may be exact, and no doubt is; but it is the narrow exactitude of man's mind. Diodati's, being far more exact to the original, is, consequently, intolerable as French. I may cite as examples, not of mistaken translation, which human infirmity is, of course, exposed to, but of false. Acts i. 22, "Must one be ordained, to be," ordained to be, is not the original at all. Acts iii. 19, "When the times," instead of "So that." This may have been from not knowing what to make of it; but it is a false translation. 2 Thess. ii. The day of Christ is "at hand," instead of, "is come," or, "come upon" [you]. The word is used more than once for present, in contrast with things to come, and always for present.—The whole teaching of the epistle, I hesitate not to say, here depends on it. Again, they have been afraid to put heavenly places in Ephesians vi. 12, in the text. The avoiding the word *bishops* (overseers), Acts xx., is of the same character. I mention only such as occur to my memory at the moment.

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Israel was the Assembly of God, but they were it by birth; though excluded, if not circumcised. All this for the time was set aside; *we may say, by the death of Christ*, though the patience of God lingered, through means of the intercession of Christ upon the cross, over the beloved people (compare Acts). The prophets had indeed spoken of all this beforehand, and, he among them, who unfolded the destinies of Israel, and their several causes more fully than any one, Isaiah, tells all through, of a remnant that should be spared, the children and disciples given to Messiah, when all was darkness in the nation, and the testimony of God shut up, save to that remnant, thus separated from the people, while God Himself hid His face from them. This remnant, would in future days return; and for their sakes, Israel be spared, and the glory of the nation be established in them (see Is. vi. 9—13, viii. 15—18, x. 21, 22, lxxv. 8, 9, and lxxvi). That chap. viii. shows us that, when the nation was set aside, this remnant came distinctively on the scene.—They were for signs to both houses of Israel.—There were two grounds for Israel's rejection; one, viewing the people as witness of the unity of the Godhead against idolatry; the other, as visited by Jehovah in the person of the Lord Jesus.—In chaps. xl.—lvii., these two points are treated. The captivity of Babylon was the judgment of their failure as to the former: hence we have Cyrus mentioned in connection with their deliverance. Their present state is the result of the rejection of their Messiah, the time the unclean spirit, after the Babylonish captivity, was gone out of them. Still it was but a remnant, preserved and brought back. That God would not look merely at the fact that they were His people, but would distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, is also clearly stated in chap. xlvi. ver. 22, where the pleading on the question of idolatry closes; and chap. lvii. ver. 21, where the pleading as to the rejection of Christ closes. And their wickedness, and the Lord's coming in power, and the intervening gospel-times, are then spoken of. At the end of their history, the unclean spirit, which had gone out, returns with seven others, worse; they are

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idolaters; and not only is Messiah negatively rejected, but they accept one who comes in his own name.—The last state is worse than the first, and wickedness ripens up into terrible judgment, which will yet be deliverance for those who will have called on the name of Jehovah, —who will have refused the idols, waited for Jehovah, and, in looking on Him, whom they had pierced, see Him come, in infinite grace, for their deliverance. But our enquiry now refers to the condition of this remnant, spared from the judgments of Israel, while God is hiding His face from the house of Jacob. The first witness we have, is only the binding up the testimony, and sealing the law, among His disciples, and waiting on Jehovah, who hides His face from the house of Jacob, and looking for Him. But this, though *all* blessing be founded on the death of Christ, does not bring in His death as a matter of knowledge. The instructions in Matthew, such as the sermon on the mount, and still more, chapters x. and xxiv, answer to this; though, of course, increased light is thrown on their position, both as to spiritual apprehension, and the introduction of the Father's name, which, Christ, as Son, as in the sermon on the mount, could do, and by the prophetic light afforded them by the Lord. Besides this, the introduction of the thought of the coming King, does cast a special light on all the instruction given. In Psalm xxii., however, where the circumstances of the blessed Lord's death, and the immense truth of His enduring the forsaking of God, are brought before us, we have more definite light as to the position into which the remnant enter in virtue of it. The Lord had borne the forsaking of God, and was now heard from the horns of the unicorn. All the unspeakable and full blessing of the inshining of God's delight, when sin was put away—a delight, which, though everlasting, was enhanced by the value of that sacrifice—expressed in the names of God and Father—enjoyed as man, as son—all burst unclouded upon His soul.—This He declared to His brethren, to put them, these poor disciples that followed Him, into the same place with Himself. He can now call them His brethren,

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for the work of redemption is accomplished.— Go, tell my brethren, He says, to Mary Magdalen, that I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. But this was not all— He raises the song of praise, in the midst of the Assembly. Thus, the remnant already manifested, the disciples are set on redemption-ground, and gathered with Christ in their midst. The Assembly, composed (as yet) of the remnant of Israel, takes a definite and true ground. The Assembly of God was there. His presence there. We have the remnant, the brethren, gathered into an Assembly (*kahal*, that is the actual gathering of them together), and the gathering founded on the sacrifice and atonement of Christ, and the power of His resurrection as to life. God was a Saviour-God, in the power of eternal life; He was known in peace, and grace, and glory— was rejoiced in in hope. The instructions of the New Testament will carry us further than all this; but thus much was laid as a foundation. For Christ died, not only to save, and not only for the nation, but to gather together in one the children of God, who were scattered abroad.

The first great element promised in Scripture, and given after the exaltation of Jesus, was the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The assembly being now formed, the Lord added to *it* daily the remnant of Israel whom he was sparing from judgment. Hereafter they will form the body of Israel itself— now they were added to the assembly. The hundred and twenty were, by grace, together in practical *kahal*, though as yet they had no definite object which rallied them, save the consciousness of a common faith, strengthened, doubtless, by Jesus visiting them the day of His resurrection and following first day of the week. But the baptism of the Holy Ghost constituted them a real *kadah*, a corporate body, a true *Ohel-Moed*, a tent of meeting, where the Lord was. He owned it formally as His assembly in the earth. A temple there was which God yet bore with, but it was not where He dwelt. It was somewhat as when the tabernacle was at Gibeon without the ark, and the ark, by delivering grace, in Mount Zion. The title of

No. V.

“ DYING TO DEATH.”

To a believer, death (his own death) is now, in point of fact, “dying to death”—“*the ceasing to have to do with dying.*” I am quite aware that this statement may be startling, at first sight, to some—perhaps to many. But is it not Truth?

Though I am a believer, yet have I now, and so shall I have, all through my pilgrim-life, the law of sin and death in my members; I have, therefore, to die daily; again, death, moral death, is reigning in the world all all around me, and the only way in which I can give a testimony of life, eternal life, here, will also be found to be inseparable from dying daily: but that which men call death—the last act of my mortal life—is really the act in which I cease for ever from all that is mortal; in which I taste for the first time without contact with death—eternal life.

When a Stephen, when a Paul, died, he (in and by his death) ceased, and for ever ceased—1st, from all connection with the law of sin and death in his members; and, 2ndly,^a from the needs-be of dying daily,—because he ceased from that which, in his body and in the circumstances of the earth, rendered it impossible for eternal life to shine out of him without his dying daily.

^a Note it well: there was nothing in the body of the blessed Lord Jesus (who was the Life) as to which He could die daily—for He was divinely perfect: but from the character of the place in which He gave testimony, that testimony could not flow out, could not be made good by Him, save by an incessant carrying by Him, of the cross, (indeed the being in the place was a cross to Him from the very nature of its evil opposition to His own purity), which, morally, He did from the very commencement of His testimony; and He had also to walk as one who had no life upon earth, either to treasure up for Himself with care, or, to protect from danger with caution.

“*Dying to Death.*”

As a believer, I am reckoned of God, and reckon myself to have been—and to be—crucified together with the Christ: that is, He in grace bore, in my stead, upon the cross, the whole judgment which was justly due to me as the penalty of my sin and of my sins. “Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Now this new life is essentially (that is, in its very self and nature it is) a new thing. It has a world and circumstances proper to it; but the source and centre of them, each and all, is the Christ of God; and He is not now in this world. While I am here below, this new life may have communion with Christ who is in God, and it may count upon the presence and guardian care of God the Holy Ghost; and it certainly is cared for by the Christ, and preserved by the Holy Ghost: yet is it in near contact with all that is in the earthen vessel in which it now is, and that earthen vessel is also in a world of iniquity. But the moment at which the tie that binds me (who am a new creature in Christ—one that is born of an incorruptible seed) to the earthen vessel is dissolved, all this connection with weakness, and sin, and sorrow, ceases at once, ceases for ever; and, at once, absent from the body I am present with the Lord; and to depart and be with the Christ is far better. This divine act, so full of grace, of dissolving the tie which binds one that is a new creature in Christ Jesus, which links him to that which is not alive in him, is it “*the wages of sin?*” By no means: so far from being the wages of sin and the expression of part of the actions of him that has the power of death, that is the devil, it is an act of Christ; and His power to do it is most emphatically one of the first *early* fruits of the complete victory of Him who, as the seed of the woman, found death (not as did Adam in the path of disobedience, but) in the path of an unparalleled obedience, and toward the very terminus of that part of the path where humiliation was to cease. To man, it is appointed once to die, and [long] after that the judgment: but in contrast to this, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. After being crucified, He was, indeed,

dead and buried: but on the third day He arose again, —showed Himself on earth, and then ascended up to heaven, and, when once seated there in heaven, then could He show forth to and in His people the fruits of His victory over Satan, and death, and the grave.

Christ ascended, and in glory with God and the Father, was Himself the proof of God’s mercy and compassion; of the complete and finished salvation which was in Him: in Him life was found, and from Him the Holy Ghost came down to form and sustain eternal life, and a testimony in and by those that believed in Him; to whom He had given a conscience made perfect from all guilt, through the knowledge of Him alive and on the throne. But more than this, life and immortality having been brought to light by the Gospel, the opening of the heavens upon man down here could take place, and the character of the glory which is hereafter to be shown in the heavens could be presented—and more than this too. For if the humiliation part of the Christ’s course was ended, and if He had in heaven, to fill up, in patient trust in God, a period of *waiting* until the time should be come for His taking His Power and reigning, not only is the believer taught to fill up that which remains behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body’s sake,—still looking onward, that if so be we suffer with Him we may also be glorified together—but also much and most blessed truth has been revealed to him, about the blessedness of being absent from the body and present with the Lord.

When death was announced as the wages of sin, there was no eternal incorruptible seed in man: moral death in disobedience; death of the body in the separation of the soul to go into an unseen world, and the body to return to dust; and the second death of the lake of fire and brimstone prepared for the devil and his angels — were all before man. Not understood by man, as they may be now understood; not set forth clearly by God, as they now are set forth; though ever, from the beginning, presented more or less clearly by Him, as a God of righteous judgment and a just Judge. But not until the Son of man was glorified, seated as Son of man in the glory

which he had had with the Father ere ever the world was, were life and immortality brought to light. That which makes the essential difference to us in handling our subject was, until then, wrapped up in a thicker cover than covered any part of the most holy of the tabernacle furniture—the curtain that hindered the light shining out, or man’s eye looking in or seeing it, was thicker than the veil of the temple which was rent at the death of Christ. Who can be thankful enough for the actual fact of the Son of man being in heaven? He is there—personally; and He makes all sure for us. From Him descends to us the light of knowledge that He is there; all the instruction, too, which we have as to the manner and kind of blessing which is ours in Him, has come down from Him; from Him, too, we have learnt about suffering now—the dying daily to self and sin and the world, even as, hereafter, we are to be in the glory which is reserved for Him: from Him, too, has descended to us the knowledge of what we are as new creatures in Christ Jesus, and how it is reserved for Him to change these bodies of humiliation, and to fashion them like unto His own body of glory, by the mighty power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself; and, before that hour come, how it is His, according to the power that pertains to Him alone, to loose and gather up to Himself that new man that He has formed in us, and thus to give us to taste, as then fully freed for ever from all that is mortal, to taste in spirit, in His presence, before the mortal body shall have put on immortality, and before this corruptible body shall have put on incorruptibility—to taste, I say, the sweetness of being “*with the Lord.*”

I know nothing that shows out more simply the divine and eternal reality of what Christ does for a poor sinner that believes in Him, than that which thus comes out to light when the tabernacle is thus left. It seems almost as if it were needful for the glory of Christ, that what He has given to us should be thus thrown out in relief. There is something in man, as a believer, which was not in Adam when first created; there is a direct contrast between its nature and the state of all that is in me and

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around: Satan has not power over it; the corrupter cannot corrupt the incorruptible seed. Liar and destroyer that he is, and having the power of death as the devil may have, yet could he not touch Job's bodily life, nor a hair of his head, without permission. This tabernacle of my body will not drop, nor shall I get away from it one moment before my Lord appoints: but whether it be burnt in the flames in martyrdom or nailed to a cross, and there and so the cord that binds me to the body be broken roughly, or whether the bond that ties the bird to the open cage be dissolved in some more gentle way, the dissolution of the tie is not the dissolution of anything immortal, but of that which is mortal. And if it ever take place (and it will never take place if Christ come in my mortal days), then it takes place under the hand and by the act of Christ Himself, who then and there will free me, completely and for ever, from all that is now mortal in me and in my circumstances, and He will use me as one of those blessed proofs of the entirely *new* order of blessing which He, as Redeemer, has introduced. He can sow the body in corruption until the hour of His appearing in glory, and realize to myself in soul and spirit what the power and what the blessedness of being absent from the body and present with the Lord: positive and real and unalloyed blessing with Himself; though not perfected as to measure until the body be raised.

Saul was once dead in trespasses and sins, and had an experience accordingly. When Christ revealed Himself to him, and gave him the new name of Paul, he became alive in Christ Jesus, and had the joy (earthen vessel as he was still in himself) of Christ in him the hope of glory: but then his experience, though gladsome in spirit on the heavenly side, was one of death and resurrection, so far as himself and his service lay in the wilderness. *Now* he is out of the precincts of death altogether; the death of his body let him go free from death, completely and for ever; Christ took him away, gathered him up, to be present with the Lord. And there above with Christ he now waits, until Christ shall rise up, and shall call up out of the graves the bodies of those that believed in

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Him; and then shall Paul, not as now, absent from the body and present with the Lord (a most anomalous state, which nothing can explain but the abnormal state of the Son of man upon the Father's throne — in patient trust, waiting for the time of His manifestation in glory), but clothed upon with a glorified human body, have the full joy and glory to which redeeming love has called him.

Let the reader mark these four states, and four experiences of Paul; and he will certainly see, that in entering upon the third of them, Paul left mortality and all that was mortal (whether death-bearing, or capable of death, be the sense of mortal) far behind him. And is it not clear, that the power to quit the mortal and to enter into the pure regions of divine immortality was not in Paul? and certainly it was not in Satan's hand or heart to give:—and the more so, because the whole being of Paul—body, soul, and spirit—went not into the place destined for it, in the new heavens; but part was left to be sown in corruption, watched over and guarded by Christ; and part taken abnormally into the presence of the Lord Jesus, in His abnormal anomalous position, which, in grace, He holds in the protracted period between the time of His suffering and the time of His reigning.

'Tis a field of pure light: cloud, is there none in it; and no dark spot either is there in this region of light; but 'tis a field which is open to *faith alone*; nought but faith can visit it; no experience of what was, or is, merely human (as in Eden's garden or in man's nature) can serve or help in the study of this field: faith, and the Word of God *alone*, can teach us what lies in it.

I need not say, that until the death and resurrection of the blessed Lord, with all the wondrous results thereof, are known, *the conscience* can never be free as to the fear of death; nor can the power be possessed of entering upon any truth whatever; for our alone power is that of the Spirit of God (imagination of man, and human imaginings have no place in God's school, save to be crucified) by which truth can be viewed and profited from.

But, again, the death and resurrection of Christ *may*

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be known, and peace in the conscience be known, and the liberty of the sons of God, individually; and yet the soul may not have its proper joy in the thought of the individual happiness which is near to it all through its pilgrimage, in this vision of the glory and of the communicable blessing which is now already Christ's, as He waits in the Majesty of the Highest for the kingdom, and thence serves His people down here.

The soul has *individually* to get settled itself, as to the peace and acceptance with God, through Christ crucified and risen from the dead. When Christ rises up from God's right hand, all that are on the earth of His shall rise up together *en masse* to meet Him: in that meeting there will be individual experience of His presence, of course; but the thought of being one in a collective crowd, brings in thoughts which modify that of one's own self meeting Him; and to a mind little exercised in truth, the communion in glory may have as wrong^b a place as the communion of saints upon earth has with some. But the intermediate stage is one in which the individuality of each stands out most conspicuously; this is happy, and profitable, and blessed.

Christ alive, and as He now is, and occupied with His people as individuals as well as collectively, and able and ready now to give to me, individually, this blessed taste of being absent from the body and present with Himself, is no more inconsistent with hope in me as to the kingdom and glory, than was His own perfect anticipation of His present position in heaven inconsistent with His own perfect onward bent in mind and action, to the crushing of the head of the serpent, and to the time and act of

^b For instance, many young Christians content themselves with this, that they know they are passed from death unto life, *because they love the brethren*: a most true and sound, because a divine, argument in its place. But, then, no love to me of the brethren, no true love in me toward them as such, would suffice for peace to my soul when it is in the light of God's soul-searching presence. There, nothing but faith in the mercy of God and in Christ, the way by which that mercy has expressed itself to me, chief of sinners though I be, could give peace and rest as down here on earth; that God's company of people is my company, is most blessed and assuring.

putting down the last of all enemies under feet. In us, truly, that hope, that purpose, had to be formed. To Him 'twas, from the first, a fixed purpose. In us, too, the beginning of the ending had to be revealed and formed; viz., His forming in the heavens His millennial court, at the beginning and not ending of His reigning. But, while these things give us the all-important placings of the great and grand parts of redemption-glory, they in no way militate or interfere with the flowings of His individual love, as He now is, to us as individuals: nor to a well-taught mind will the blaze of light and glory, that marks the display of the Christ in the heavens and over the earth, veil that love which—till the time of His taking His own in the heaven comes—has made Him mindful of the individual people of His love, who, in succeeding generations, from the time of Stephen onwards, have been housed, one after the other, when their work was done, and made to know the blessedness of that anomalous “*absent from the body and present with the Lord, which is FAR better.*”

Some may say, “I wait for the Lord to come and *not* for death:” so, truly, say I. But *that* is NOT the question; nor is the statement thus made the real expression of what is in the mind of the maker, at least, in many cases. That for which Christ waits, the Spirit and the Bride of Christ also wait; and as the Spirit and the Bride say “Come:” so does He, most surely, say: “Behold, I come quickly.” But that is not *the least* in question. I wait for Christ *until* He comes. But the question is (that which some overlook). Am I to wait for His coming *here* in the wilderness; or am I, absent from the body and present with the Lord, *there* to wait for His coming?

Again, the statement is often the expression of will, human will; and, often, is the cover of the thought of having a right of our own, and of not being, solely and altogether, the right and property of another. Now, blessed be God, we are bought with a price; we are not our own. To the Spirit that leads us, our likings (according to nature and flesh) are not what regulates in any way, but the work of God and the glory of Christ.

“*Dying to Death.*”

When the work of God and the glory of Christ, in our course here below are answered—the love, divine and human, of Christ wills to have us *with Himself*. And He is worthy to have His pleasure, in God’s appointed pathway for us, made good. We are not our own, but bought with a price—even the costly price of His most precious blood. Blessed be God, that He confers not with our flesh, but takes His own course and way of blessing; yet making us willing in the day of His power! And surely the blessed fulness and freshness of His love to us, individually; who delights in us as His own, as given to Him by His Father—may well quicken our affections and desires to hear His voice calling us, when so He wills, home to Himself.

To conclude; it is Christ, personally, who has loved me and called me, as an individual, that I should form a needed part in that glory which God, in His love, has provided for Him. But let that glory be what it may—an inheritance incorruptible, or the presentation of the church as a glorious church—I am bold to say, “I love my Lord better than the inheritance, better than the glitter of all the glory.” Yea, when I think even of the many sons presented in the Father’s house, or of the presentation of the Bride—the glory has (if one may so say) no glory to my heart in comparison with the joy of Christ’s heart, through the joy of His Father in Himself, at the bringing of the sons to glory; and is not the church’s blessing this, that He presents her to *Himself* a glorious church, &c. I do not want (so to speak) the house without the Father and the Son in it. What would it, or the glory of the city, be to me without them? I love the Father and the Son, in personal presence, anywhere, better than their circumstances. Rather would I have Egypt’s cruel bondage with Christ for my comfort under it, than all the brightest scenes in Canaan without Himself. ’Tis *Himself* which is my joy far above the Glory. Will not every renewed heart say, Amen, and Amen!?

N^o. VI.

THE SOVEREIGN RIGHTS OF GOD RESPECTED; THE WELL-BEING OF MAN SECURED.

THE Revelation of God, in His Word, solves a problem which, more or less, has occupied mankind in all ages; but in our times, peculiarly so. The necessity of authority and the supremacy of rule, has been intuitively admitted. The source of it has been disputed. To whom power ought to be confided is a vexed question; but that law or authority we must have—having its validity in the consent of the mass, or in the sanction of the few, or otherwise—is agreed upon by all. The world heaves with the struggling in men's minds, to arrive at conclusions; the Theories advanced are as diversified as the climate, and as variable as the seasons; the well-being of our country is assumed as positive data for conclusive judgment; the sorrows of another, in like manner; the world is inundated with speculations, and, far worse, is groaning under trials which man seeks to mitigate by attributing to one cause or other, the failure of everything; to have, in his turn, his theories canvassed, and his conclusions contradicted. Mankind has existed some six thousand years, to awaken the present generation to the fact, that if they had glimpses of good, they were impotent to follow it. If, in the pages of history, the eye rests with pleasure upon the social condition of some favoured portion of the globe—it is recalled to remembrance, along with the fact, of man's helplessness to retain it: if good, it degenerated; if bad, it grew worse. There is one lesson to learn from the experience of the past; and that is, to cease expectation from man in the future. The purposes of God, as revealed in His Word, with the revelation of His character, enable man to do so. Where God is known, He is to

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be confided in; He, who created man's nature, knows best what is suited to it; He, who endowed man with such excellent faculties, knows best how to respect them; He, who feeds the ravens and clothes the grass of the field, was not likely to be less mindful of man, who was created in His own image. When the Rights of God are respected; the well-being of man is secured.

The Bible is such a revelation of God, as is befitting God; and such a revelation of man, as answers to man. Men are represented in the Bible, as being what they are; mankind is found to be such as God's Word represents it. When God created the world, the world needed God to sustain it; when God had created man upright, man needed God to sustain him. Independence of God ruined man, separated him from his only strength; and as a vessel without rudder may still float upon the waters, yet her course is shapeless, and she is at the mercy of every contingency of wind or tide, so with man, when his heart no longer responded to God; when God had no longer authority over man's heart, then man failed in his conduct to man. When Cain failed to acknowledge the rights of God, the consequences were fatal to Abel. He slew his brother. Disrespect of man to God, led to the murder of man by his fellow. God had a property in Abel; he was made for His pleasure. Cain not only did violence to fraternal relationship, but he disregarded the right of God upon Abel.

Man is instructed of God to have regard to man. The judgments of God—as, for instance, in the Deluge—fell upon man, because of the violence which was upon the face of the earth. The whole earth was filled with violence; the Deluge swept away an intolerable generation, whose existence was misery prolonged, and who had turned the earth—which God gave man to dwell in—into a nursery for crime and oppression. After the Deluge, in His regard for man, God committed judgment into the hands of man. Whosoever shed man's blood, by man should his blood be shed; and the reason is given, for in the image of God made He man. We are taught by God, who made us, to have respect to one another. God has

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a property in man. For His pleasure we are created; and God's title respected, is a safeguard for man's life being respected. Government was committed to the hands of man for protection of man; disregard of God entailed sad consequences. The whole earth was of one speech, and they united together against God. Had they succeeded for a time, so much the worse for man. But God interfered, and confounded their language and strength for evil. Still, idolatry had crept in; as in Joshua xxiv. 15. The knowledge of the true God was lost, and man disregarded. God reveals Himself to Abraham, and the knowledge of God separated Abraham from idolatry around. Was Abraham a worse man for acknowledging Jehovah? Did man suffer the more, now that God was revealed? When Lot was taken captive, how speedily Abram sought his deliverance! When, again, Lot was in Sodom, how, by intercession, Abram succoured him. When God was about to destroy Sodom and its inhabitants, how careful was Abraham on their behalf! And when he acknowledged the claim of God on the life of his son, his only son Isaac, was Abraham a sufferer? God probed, to the quick, the heart of His servant; and when it was found true to his Maker, God did the more clearly shew how the parental instincts, which He had bestowed, were by Himself respected. He provided a Lamb for an offering. God would make Himself known to the seed of His servant, and make them His people; it should be proved in the earth which rejected its Creator, that they were foolish in doing so; it should be found truest wisdom to acknowledge and own Him. They went down into Egypt seventy in number, and came forth a mighty people. They were delivered from bondage in a manner worthy of Him who delivered them. The Egyptians had gods of their own, and they held men in bondage. They gloried in the achievements of science, yet their minds were enslaved. They raised mighty monuments to honour the dead, and goaded to exertion by tortures, the living who built them. They had demons of cruelty for gods, and they treated men cruelly. Man's truest liberty is secured, where the claims of God are honoured and regarded.

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For illustration of this more closely, let us glance at that revelation of God to man in one aspect of the law of the Ten Commandments, as given to Moses. The revelation of His rights contains the declaration of His character. The creature never could have supported the honour due to God his Creator. Revelation from God could alone be the basis of true knowledge of God. Man, as man, might judge of the nature and claims of man; God, as God, only could understand His nature and claims as God.

What passed before man was created, is given to us in the account of Creation, and could only be given to us by One who had being before man. The first chapter of Genesis, of necessity, antedates the existence of man, and is a record given by God, the Holy Ghost, of His works before man was fashioned. Hence, the value of Scripture, the wonderful importance of revelation. God Himself condescending to instruct man in His ways, and and give him the history of His creation. We possess, in the first chapter of Genesis, the manifestation of the being of God, who created us; and, in the majesty of His communication, we instinctively recognize our Creator. The heavens and earth are not more harmoniously combined, than is the succinct narration of it; and no wonder, for the Spirit of God originated both. The fall of man; the wickedness of man before the flood; the daring impiety after it, on the plains of Shinar; the call of Abraham out of an evil, corrupted world, to the knowledge of God who made heaven and earth. The preservation of his posterity in Egypt, and their deliverance out of it by the hand of Moses; their passage through the Red Sea in safety, whilst their enemies were overwhelmed in its waters, were but necessary preliminaries to their meeting with God at Mount Sinai, where He would reveal Himself further, and proclaim His sovereign rights as Creator, as the best safeguard for the well-being of His creatures. The invisible things of Him that created them, manifest, clearly, His eternal power and Godhead. "The God of Glory appeared unto Israel;" from Him Moses received the lively oracles to give unto them. The Laws He gave unto Moses

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manifest, clearly, His moral perfections. As Creator He cared for the moral well-being of man created. Yet we must remember when and how this revelation of Himself occurs. It is not made to man as standing in his primæval integrity. In other words, not on the ground of Creation. God made man upright! Sin entered: man is separated from God. Now, God reveals Himself to man on the ground of *Redemption*. Exodus xx. 1., "And God spake these words, saying: I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The creature having lost its relationship by disobedience to his Creator, is taken up on the ground of a redemption. The price of that redemption is found in the grace of God Himself. He would have mercy on whom He would have mercy. Creation-standing, of necessity, was in the perfection of Him that created. Redemption, out of an evil condition, necessarily presumes that such had existed. Absence from God led to ignorance of God. Redemption to God (even of Israel, as a nation) needed instruction; and this instruction is vouchsafed in the revelation of God as placed before us in the law of the Ten Commandments given to Moses, in one aspect of it. For the first table of the law brings before us the sovereign rights of God; and these respected, involve the well-being of man. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me:" is the majestic annunciation of His sovereignty. God would share His glory with none other.

"Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or any likeness that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." God is God, and made all things for His glory. No figure could represent Him; no likeness could be made of Him. What He is in Himself—almighty, omniscient, omnipresent—no creature can adequately pourtray. In His revealed character is man's confidence. To compare God to any created thing, is to rob ourselves. "I am what I am." The heavens declare God's glory; the firmament sheweth His handywork. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal

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power and Godhead" (Rom. i. 20). Life, breath, and being, are but the expressions of what He is—proofs of what He can do. To set up the creature for God—idols made of stocks and stones—to give to God the properties ascribed to idols—which have their original in a corrupted imagination—and then to bow down to them and worship them—what is this but to make the creature the foundation of Deity, instead of the Deity the foundation of the creature! What unheard-of miseries have sprung from this source! What are the annals of pagan idolatry, but annals of evil incarnate? Man investing his idol with the evil character of his own heart in personal embodiment, and then shaping his ways in the light of this evil. What fearful results! the degradation of Deity, the degradation of man.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh His name in vain." Again, we have God jealous of His glory. The heart that owned Him, must learn to honour Him. As Omnipresent, nothing escapes His eye; as Omniscient, He understandeth our thoughts afar off. When we speak of Him He hears; when we act for Him, He sees. Reverence for His majesty, forbids alike the frivolous use of His name, or the blasphemous taking of His name in vain. The glory of the Creator demands the reverence of His creature.

"Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God!" Yes, the Sabbath of God; and, because His, the rest-day of man. Not the working-man's day, but the day of God for the working-man, and the cattle too. Could anything more illustrate the fact, that in the sovereign rights of God respected—the well-being of man is secured.

Now follow rules for man's government. Obedience to parents: "Honour thy father and thy mother." Regard to human life: "Thou shalt not kill." Prohibition on the one hand, protection on the other. Man may not kill; man may not be killed. Regard to the holiest of ties: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

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Regard to property: "Thou shalt not steal." Regard to character: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." "A good name, is better than precious ointment." And, lastly: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."

How manifestly we have to do with the living God who made us, in this declaration of the glory due to Himself, and the regard for His creature man! How well our nature is apprehended, our sympathies and affections, how thoroughly understood; and in these statutes, how paternally cared for! God, the Creator, understands the wants and feelings of man, His creature. — The Lord Jesus illustrates His Father's care when teaching His disciples: "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them." "How much more are ye better than the sparrows!"—"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."—Ps. cvii. 43.

 EXTRACT.

"According to Bengel (born 1687), the Christian has not so much to wait for death as for the appearance of Jesus Christ, and the most important business for every man is to come from a state of sin into a state of grace, and afterwards not to look for death, but for the Lord. Death had originally no place in the economy of God and was only introduced afterwards.

"Bengel did not think highly of the *artificial* mode of dying, and followed his own ideas thereon. He would not die with spiritual pomp;* but in a common way, and was employed to the last with his proof-sheets. It was as if he was called out of his room during the hours of work."

* He did not agree with those divines who consider the whole of divinity to be nothing more than the art of dying.

N^o. VII.

“LET US HOLD FAST OUR PROFESSION.”

WE all know, and acknowledge the value of having a fixed purpose, which gives a character to our life and ways. Our need demands a purpose, which promises to meet it sufficiently and perfectly; and the more distinctly the purpose is apprehended and embraced, the more all our acts must bear characteristic impression of it. — Our God, therefore, knowing this need of ours, provides us with a purpose; but does so, by attracting us to *His* purpose, *for* us, as the goal of all our hearts need or seek; and thus makes it *our* purpose too; purposed of Him *for* us, and presented by Him *to* us, as appointed, and as the provision of His love, to satisfy our utmost need or expectation. The sense of need, first engages us with the value of the purpose, and the purpose is enhanced, when we find that it is not only a measure for our need, but that it is also according to the measure of the love of God for us. God's purpose must be reached, ere our necessities can be satisfied. The purpose of the prodigal, in seeking his Father's house, was to relieve his famished state; but, when that was attained, he found out, that the purpose of the Father (even that the unworthy son should enter into the common joy with Himself), was *also* accomplished, and until he had reached this, his own need was not entirely or fully met.

In every revelation which God made to man, His purpose or call always defined the perfect blessing, which He designed for man, and this alone could meet his condition. Man may never (as indeed it has happened), have fully responded to this call; but, according as he was fixed on it, followed it, and partially reached it; so

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was his blessing; nay, every faithful soul, in every dispensation, embraced his calling, and the purpose of God; and, proportionate to his pursuance and enjoyment of it, was his testimony and strength. Ignorance or misapprehension, as to the true nature of the purpose or calling, must necessarily affect the walk and spirit of the professionists of it. My profession is strictly in accordance with my aim or purpose; if I decline from or misapprehend the latter, the former must suffer; and if I “hold fast my profession,” it is easy to comprehend my purpose, for my profession is nothing more than the assertion of the principles, which the attainment of my purpose would establish. God’s purpose, respecting us, is our calling, as He reveals it. We hear the calling, and adopt it, and if we adhere to it, we “hold fast our profession;” if not, we lose sight of our calling, and are manifestly irresponsive to it. In every dispensation, God’s purpose of blessing for man is unfolded, and man’s testimony, and victory over surrounding difficulties, were always proportionate to his embracing it, and “holding fast his profession,” according to it.

To Adam, God announced that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head; his profession, accordingly, must be, that he expected such an event, and hence, instead of perpetuating the reproach on his wife, as, in strict justice, he might have done; he called her name, Eve, “the mother of all living.” So that Adam’s profession, when, driven from Eden, he entered on his exile, was, that the source of his fall, would, through God’s grace, be the source of his life. He believed and acknowledged the purpose of God, which Cain, on the other hand, would not accept; and, in doing this, Adam merely assumed the position, which God, in His grace, proposed to him. Death might fall on every creature in Adam’s sight, but his profession was registered in the name which he had given to her who had introduced death.

So also in Abraham; his profession was, that he was a stranger and a pilgrim, that he “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is

God,” and he held fast his profession, because he believed in the purpose of God. The moment he swerved from the one, he was, necessarily, inconsistent in the other. Lot lost sight of the purpose, and, in a little time, bore no evidence of the profession; but, in judgment, lost the blessing, which the maintenance of the profession obtained for Abraham. We cannot evade the responsibility of holding fast our profession, on the plea of weakness; for it is not an assumption on the part of man, nor a legal demand on him, but a practical acknowledgment of the pre-ordained, pre-determined purpose of God respecting him; and if this acknowledgment be refused, it amounts to disbelieving and disregarding the counsel of God, for our blessing. It is, I repeat, the path of testimony and blessing. Lot forfeited both in Sodom. Abraham was honoured with both, though less surrounded with natural advantages. If Lot had held fast his profession, it would have preserved him from the snares of Sodom. He, no doubt, would have felt it trying to maintain his ground, as a stranger and pilgrim; and he might allege, that he had not strength enough to do so, but, surely, abandoning his profession, did not increase his strength. On the contrary, it is very plain, that if he had maintained (however feebly in spirit), the profession which led him from Charran, in company with Abraham, he never would have been found in Sodom, or, consequently, have shared in its judgment. To adhere to a profession, where ourselves, and every one can mark our inconsistencies,—is harassing and humbling; but still, there is safety therein, if there be godly intention to fulfil it; whereas, there is none if we surrender it; and, what is worse, such surrender is a practical refusal to acknowledge God’s gracious purpose, respecting us. The calling is always in accordance with the purpose, and our obedience to the one, indicates our appreciation of the other; the more the calling is pressed on me, the more are my ways measured by the rule of it; being measured, I am humbled, and, necessarily, cast on God, not to refuse His calling, but to obtain strength to uphold it.

Israel sang of themselves to the Lord, after they had passed the Red Sea: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance." They thus celebrate the purpose of God, respecting them; their profession, accordingly, as long as they believed His word, was, that they were not for Egypt, but for Canaan; and, come what will, to Canaan they must go; for, in the Wilderness, a land of drought, it was plain they had no rest. Their calling was to "go up, and possess the land;" their profession, that they were set on this, and *nothing else*; their song declared how they had accepted it, as the truth of God, in which they rejoiced. Every step they took in the Wilderness, towards Canaan, told how they "held fast their profession;" how they had heard the word mixed with faith. To require an inspection of the Promised Land before they attempted to possess it, was a falter in their profession, and it proved fatal to them. They had lost faith in the word which once infused such spirit into their song, and difficulties (which in this evil scene must exist) are reported by the spies, the majority of whom are as unbelieving as the people themselves. When faith falters, and great difficulties are foreseen, man *must* be discouraged, and the more so, if he be in the path of God's calling, for the work *of* God, can only be accomplished *by* God. The difficulties were too great for man, without faith; though sure to be surmounted with faith. The calling to "go up and possess" measured their faith, and being measured and confounded, they turned back to Egypt, in the spirit of their minds, recanted their song, and ignored the profession they had made.—But what was the penalty? Their carcasses fell in the Wilderness, and they were "destroyed of the destroyer;" they despised the pleasant land, and it was closed against them. And we find in 1 Cor. x., where the various failures of Israel are recounted for our warning, this murmuring or faltering of faith at Kadesh Barnea, is adduced *last* by the apostle, although it occurred early in their actual history. I believe this to be so given designedly, shewing the moral order in Corinthians, as we have the historical order in Numbers.

When they turned their backs on Canaan, and God's purpose respecting them was disbelieved and undervalued, nothing more could be offered; therefore, to let go their profession, was the most fatal and final step of all.

In the Book of Hebrews, two subjects are prominently brought before us: the one, the object, the channel of blessing, Jesus Christ; the other, the place where He is; to which, through grace, we are called according to the purpose of God. The object is at once presented to us; and, *in* the place, *i.e.*, “on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Our calling is to be heavenly; our profession, answering thereto, is, that we *are* heavenly. Christ, who is our life, is heavenly. Heaven is His place, and the place of our life. It is not merely that we are expectants of heaven, but we are partakers of the heavenly calling. The calling or word to me is, not “to go up and possess,” but, that if I hear His voice, I enter into rest. I enjoy God's rest; that is, my soul finds there is an end, an eternal end, to works, in the rest accomplished at the right hand of God, by Jesus Christ our Saviour.

I find many difficulties in maintaining this ground, though (like Israel), in the “beginning of my confidence,” none may have appeared. But why decline from the beginning of my confidence? Have I received the word not mixed with faith? Have I assumed a profession which I cannot uphold? Am I to turn back like Israel? No! My calling is higher; my resources are greater. The word, or calling (for so I understand “the word of God” in Heb. iv.), measures my walk and spirit, as it did Israel of old. It tested *them*, as to whether they were for Egypt or for Canaan; it tests *me*, as to whether I am heavenly or earthly. When Israel was measured and exposed, they were confounded and turned back to Egypt; when I am measured and exposed (and surely nothing measures my walk and spirit so much as the enquiry as to whether it corresponds with the heavenly standing), it is with God I have to do. “But” (many would say), “I don't make so high a profession, for I could not keep up to it.” Such a statement, I

repeat, is a misapprehension of the simple fact, that our profession is but our response to the purpose of God respecting us, and which we are called to in His grace, and through grace alone are connected with.

If it be said, again, that the difficulties are so great, and I am so earthly, and the word of God is always measuring and exposing me: quite true; but are we measured and exposed, in order to drive us from our profession? Nay, verily; but to lead the soul, thus exposed and rebuked, to sanction the dictation of the Word, for it is with God we have to do; and this we find out by the very exposure which the Word produces; and there the sympathies of “Jesus the Son of God, passed into the heavens,” meet us, and sustain us in the path which He Himself traversed, until we rest where He rests, above and beyond every difficulty. The word to us is “to enter into His rest.” This is the purpose of God respecting us. Our profession is, that we are entering into rest; and Jesus Christ is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.

The Word always measures and tests how and where we fail in walking according to its voice. It searches, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It discovers my wanderings by expressing its injunction. I am thus made to feel my wanderings, and to accept the dictation of the Word, and am on the path of Him whose meat and drink was to do the will of God, and who triumphed over every obstacle in maintaining and fulfilling it. I am in the spirit of His mind when I accept the call of the Word, having repudiated my own course, which the Word condemns; and, once on the path He has trod, I am met by His sympathies to sustain me in it.

“Perfection” (*i. e.*, association with Christ where He is) is our utmost attainment; but our profession is, that we are “going on to perfection.” We cannot adopt any other; for none other would be according to the purpose of God, or to His glory; and (let me add what is very important) any other would obstruct us, however sincerely we might wish to enter on it. Whereas, while

adhering to the profession, though constantly inconsistent with it, we, though humbled, are always owning the blessedness of what we are aiming at; and being condemned by our own profession, must always rejoice whenever we advance at all according to it. My profession is, that I am heavenly; my walk and ways continually testify that I am *not* heavenly. Am I to accept what I am practically, or what God calls me to and reckons me? If I am not heavenly, I have no conscious connexion with Christ; I know nothing of rest, nor of priesthood, nor of refreshment, nor of communion, nor of worship, nor of proper testimony here. If I know Christ on the right hand of the Majesty on high, I know Him as One who has accomplished all works to bring me nigh unto God; and knowing Him *there*, I have rest; and if I know Him not there, I have not rest. If I know Him not there, I know Him not as a Priest; either as Aaron in sympathy, or as Melchizedec in blessing and glory (for on earth He would not be a Priest). If I know Him not *there*, I know not worship; for it is through Him I have boldness to enter into the holiest of all. If I know Him not *there*, I have no equivalent for my devotedness here; for I could not “take joyfully the spoiling of my goods” here, if I did not know that I had in heaven an “enduring substance”; nor would “looking unto Jesus” help me in my conflict, unless I know Him as set down at the right hand of the “THRONE of God”—the place of confirmation and strength of faith for saints, as is the “Majesty on high” that of acceptance for sinners. If I did not know Him in heaven, I could not have communion with Him; for “we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle.” “Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son.” “These things I write unto you, that your joy may be full.” If I know Him not in heaven, my testimony here must be valueless; for it is necessary that I go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach.

In a word, if I give up the profession which is responsive and responsible to the call, I surrender the declaration of my incumbency to walk according to it. If, on the contrary, I “hold fast my profession,” though ever

“*Let us hold fast our Profession.*”

and anon reminded of my inconsistencies, the very fact of my persisting to make the profession convicts me of approving of what it requires, and condemns me for any departure from it. I may be publicly humbled, but my profession is according to the purpose of God, and I cannot shrink from assuming it. Being humbled, I desire and labour the more to walk according to it, so that the very persisting in the profession which tests my walk and ways works a remedy for the inconsistencies which it exposes. Confession of the mouth has a wonderful effect in producing a consistent co-operation in acts, unless when there is designed deception. No purged mind likes to see his acts inconsistent with his confession or profession (one word in Scripture). What the mouth utters with integrity, the honest soul would always like to confirm in act; but many honest souls shrink from profession, because they are conscious of the responsibility involved; again proving no moral value of the exhortation, “Hold fast your profession.”

One word more. Israel sent out spies, discovered the obstacles, and were discouraged. This is always the effect of examining what is before us *without* God. If we have God *with* us, we need not know what is before us; and all prescience of the future without Him must have the same effect on us as it had on Israel, viz., discouragement and wilfulness. Instead of seeing cities walled up to heaven and sons of Anak, as did they, we are exhorted to see Jesus, the Son of God, passed into the heavens; our eye is to be engaged with Him who has passed beyond every difficulty, and from *thence* ministers of His own strength, to lead us onward and upward unto Himself; not to help us merely *IN* this world, but to help us *OUT* of it. “For this cause I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified thoroughly.” Our sanctification must be of the same character as His. His was not moral, for that was not necessary for Him, but positional, and, consequently, as our moral sanctification is association with Him, it must be positional also.

Let us, then, “hold fast our profession.” We are heavenly; humbled we must be at being so unheavenly;

but the more humbled we are at our unheavenliness, the more we shall renounce it; and as we renounce it, and walk in the light of the Word, we shall learn, rejoice in and be sustained by, the sympathies of Christ, and so pass practically into true heavenly association with Him.

FRAGMENT.

Death worsts all flesh that comes under it! True; but faith worsts death itself.

He that has the power of death is the devil; but the Christ of God, Object and Giver of faith, is greater than he. The Christ ever was and is above Satan. He became, indeed, obedient unto death,—the death of the Cross; that, through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And, if He gave His heel to be bitten, it was in grace, that in bruising Satan’s head He might do it as *Redeemer*. “His be the Victor’s name, Who fought our fight alone; Triumphant saints no honour claim, His conquest was their own.

“By weakness and defeat, He won the meed and crown; Trod all our foes beneath His feet, By being trodden down. He hell in hell laid low; Made sin, He sin o’erthrew; Bow’d to the grave and burst it so, And Death, by dying slew.”

Yet, however, a man may be ready to endure all hardness; and however he may see what Christ did, in His first coming, in His death and resurrection, he will not have victory in death unless he see and abide in communion with Christ in the heavenly places. ’Tis only with a risen Christ that relationship can be traced, that union exists,—a living Christ in heaven is ours. The writer of the hymn, just quoted, had *no* settled peace: for his faith stopped short of an ascended Christ. It was the knowledge of an ascended Christ, alive in heaven, that led one to say “It would kill me, with very joy,—if I heard I was a dying.”

N^o. VIII.

DISCIPLESHIP IN AN EVIL DAY.

THE first three chapters of the Book of Daniel furnish a most seasonable and important lesson at a time like the present, in which the disciple is in such danger of yielding to surrounding influences, and of lowering his standard of testimony and his tone of discipleship, in order to meet the existing condition of things.

At the opening of chap. i. we have a most discouraging picture of the state of things, in reference to the ostensible witness of God on the earth — “ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the house of his god ” (chap. i. 1, 2). Here, then, we have an aspect of things quite sufficient, if looked at from nature’s point of view, to discourage the heart, to damp the spirit, and paralyse the energies. Jerusalem in ruins, the temple trodden down, the Lord’s vessels in the house of a false god, and Judah carried away captive. Surely, the heart would feel disposed to say, there is no use in seeking to hold up the standard of practical discipleship and personal devotedness any longer. The spirit must droop, the heart must faint, and the hands must hang down, when such is the condition of the people of God. It could be nought but the most contemptible presumption for any of Judah’s sons to think of taking up a true Nazarite’s position at such a time.

Such would be nature’s reasoning; but such was not the language of faith. Blessed be God! there is always a wide sphere in which the spirit of genuine devotedness

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can develop itself—there is always a path along which the true disciple can run, even though he should have to run in solitude. It matters not what the outward condition of things may be, it is faith's privilege to hang as much on God, to feed as much on Christ, and to breathe as much of the air of heaven, as though all were in perfect order and harmony.

This is an unspeakable mercy to the faithful heart. All who desire to walk devotedly, can always find a path to walk in; whereas, on the contrary, the man who draws a plea, from outward circumstances, for relaxing his energy, would not be energetic, though most favourably situated.

If ever there was a time in the which one might be excused for taking a low ground, it was the time of the Babylonish captivity. The entire framework of Judaism was broken up; the kingly power had passed out of the hand of David's successor, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; the glory had departed from Israel; and, in one word, all seemed faded and gone, and nought remained for the exiled children of Judah save to hang their harps upon the willows, and sit down by the rivers of Babylon, there to weep over departed glory, faded light, and fallen greatness.

Such would be nature's thought and feeling; but, blessed be God! it is when everything appears sunk to the lowest possible point, that then faith rises in holy triumph; and faith, we know, is the only true basis of effective discipleship. It asks for no proofs from the men and things around it; it finds "*all* its springs" in God; and hence it is that faith never shines so brightly as when all around is dark. It is when nature's horizon is overcast with the blackest clouds, that faith basks in the sunshine of the divine favour and faithfulness.

Thus it was, that Daniel and his companions were enabled to overcome the peculiar difficulties of their time. They judged that there was nothing to hinder their enjoying as elevated a Nazariteship in Babylon as ever had been known in Jerusalem; and they judged rightly. Their judgment was the judgment of a pure and well-founded faith. It was the self-same judgment

on which the Baraks, the Gideons, the Jephthas, and the Samsons of old had acted. It was the judgment to which Jonathan gave utterance, when he said, "There is no restraint with the Lord to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. xiv.). It was the judgment of David, in the valley of Elah, when he called the poor trembling host of Israel "the army of the living God" (1 Sam. xvii.). It was the judgment of Elijah, on Mount Carmel, when he built an altar with "twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob" (1 Kings xviii.). It was the judgment of Daniel himself when, at a further stage of his history, he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem (Dan. vi.). It was the judgment of Paul when, in view of the overwhelming tide of apostasy and corruption which was about to set in, he exhorts his son Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim. i. 13). It was the judgment of Peter when, in prospect of the dissolution of the entire framework of creation, he encourages believers to "be diligent, that they may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Pet. iii. 14). It was the judgment of John when, amid the actual breaking up of everything ecclesiastical, he exhorts his well-beloved Gaius to "follow not that which is evil, but that which is good" (3 John ii.). And it was the judgment of Jude when, in the presence of the most appalling wickedness, he encourages a beloved remnant to "build themselves up in their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, to keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 20, 21). In one word, it was the judgment of the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, it was the judgment of faith.

Now, all this attaches immense value and interest to Daniel's determination, as expressed in the first chapter of this book — "But Daniel purposed in his heart, that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (ver. 8). He might, very naturally, have said to himself, "There is no use in one poor feeble captive seeking to maintain a place of sepa-

ration. Everything is broken up. It is impossible to carry out the true spirit of a Nazarite amid such hopeless ruin and degradation. I may as well accommodate myself to the condition of things around me."

But, no; Daniel was on a higher ground than this. He knew, it was his privilege to live as close to God in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, as within the gates of Jerusalem. He knew, that let the outward condition of the people of God be what it might, there was a path of purity and devotedness opened to the individual saint, which he could pursue independently of every thing.

And, may we not say, that the Nazariteship of Babylon possesses charms and attractions fully as powerful as the Nazariteship of Canaan? Unquestionably. It is unspeakably precious and beautiful, to find one of the captives in Babylon, breathing after, and attaining unto so elevated a standard of separation. It teaches a powerful lesson, for every age. It holds up to the view of believers, under every dispensation, a most encouraging and soul-stirring example. It proves, that, amid the darkest shades, a devoted heart can enjoy a path of cloudless sunshine.

But, how is this? Because "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever" (Heb. xiii.) Dispensations change and pass away. Ecclesiastical institutions crumble and moulder into ashes. Human systems totter and fall; but the name of Jehovah endureth for ever, and His memorial unto all generations. It is upon this holy elevation that faith plants its foot. It rises above all vicissitude, and enjoys sweet converse with the unchangeable and eternal Source of all real good.

Thus it was, that in the days of the Judges, faith achieved more glorious triumphs than ever were known in the days of Joshua. Thus it was, that Elijah's altar on mount Carmel was surrounded by a halo, fully as bright as that which crowned the altar of Solomon.

This is truly encouraging. The poor heart is so apt to sink, and be discouraged, by looking at the failure and unfaithfulness of man, instead of at the infallible faithfulness of God. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.

And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19.) What can ever touch this enduring truth? Nothing. And, therefore, nothing can touch the faith which lays hold of it, or the superstructure of practical devotedness which is erected on the foundation of that faith.

And, then, look at the glorious results of Daniel's devotedness and separation. In the three opening chapters, we observe three distinct things, resulting from the position assumed by Daniel and his companions, in reference to "the king's meat." 1. They were let into the secret of "*the king's dream.*" 2. They withstood the seductions of "*the king's image.*" And, 3, they were brought unscathed through "*the king's furnace.*"

I. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." This is beautifully exemplified in the case before us. "The magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans," who were breathing the atmosphere of the royal presence, were all in the dark as to the royal dream. "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter." Very likely; but there was a God in heaven who knew all about it; and who, moreover, could unfold it to those who had faith enough, and devotedness enough, and self-denial enough, to separate themselves from Babylonish pollutions, though involved in the Babylonish captivity. The mazes, the labyrinths, and the enigmas of human things are all plain to God; and He can and does make them plain to those who walk with Him, in the sanctity of His holy presence. God's Nazarites can see further into human affairs than the most profound philosophers of this world. And how is this? How can they so readily unravel the world's mysteries? Because they are above the world's mists. They are apart from the world's defilements. They are in the place of separation, the place of dependence, the place of communion. "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Haniah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions; that they would desire mercies of the Lord of Heaven, concerning this secret" (chap. ii. 17, 18.) Here, we have their

place of strength and intelligence. They had only to look up to heaven, in order to be endowed with a clear understanding as to all the destinies of earth.

How real and simple is all this! "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" and, hence, if we want light, we can only find it in His presence; and we can only know the power of His presence, as we are practically taking the place of separation from all the moral pollutions of earth.

And, observe, a further result of Daniel's holy separation. "Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him." Here, we have earth's proudest and most powerful monarch at the feet of the captive exile. Magnificent fruit of faithfulness! Precious evidence of the truth, that God will always honour the faith, that can, in any measure, rise to the height of His thoughts! He will not, He cannot dishonour the draft which confidence presents at His exhaustless treasury. Daniel, on this memorable occasion, realised, in his own person, as fully as ever it was realised, God's ancient promise, "And all people of the earth shall see, that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. . . . And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath" (Deut. xxviii. 10, 13.).

Assuredly, Daniel was, in the above scene, "the head," and Nebuchadnezzar, "the tail," as looked at from the divine point of view. Witness, also, the bearing of this holy Nazarite, in the presence of the impious Belshazzar (Dan. v. 17—29.) Have we not, here, as magnificent a testimony to the destined pre-eminence of the seed of Abraham, as when Joshua's victorious captains placed their feet on the necks of the kings of Canaan (Josh. x. 24); or, when "all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart?" (1 Kings x. 24). Unquestionably; and, in a certain sense, it is a more magnificent testimony. It is natural to expect such a scene in the history of Joshua, or of Solomon; but, to find the haughty king of Baby-

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lon, prostrate at the feet of one of his captives, is something far beyond the utmost stretch of nature's expectation.

There it is, however, as a most striking, and soul-stirring proof of the power of faith to triumph over all manner of difficulties, and to produce the most extraordinary results. Faith is the same mighty principle, whether it acts on the plains of Palestine, on the top of Carmel, by the rivers of Babylon, or amid the ruins of the professing Church. No fetters can bind it, no difficulties deter it, no pressure damp it, no changes affect it. It ever rises to its proper object, and that object is God Himself, and His eternal revelation. Dispensations may change, ages may run their course, the wheels of time may roll on, and crush beneath their ponderous weight the fondest hopes of the poor human heart; but, there stands faith, that immortal, divine, eternal reality, drinking at the fountain of pure truth, and finding all its springs in Him, who is "the way, the truth and the life."

By this "precious faith," it was, that Daniel acted, when he "purposed that he would not defile himself with the king's meat." True he could no longer ascend to that holy and beautiful house, where his fathers had worshipped. The rude foot of a foreign foe had trodden down the holy city. The fire no longer burned on the altar of the God of Israel. The golden candlestick no longer enlightened, with its seven lamps, the holy place. But, there was faith in Daniel's heart, and that faith carried him beyond every surrounding influence, and enabled him to appropriate, and act in the power of, "all the promises of God," which "are Yea, and Amen in Christ Jesus." Faith is not affected by ruined temples, fallen cities, faded lights, or departed glories. Why not? Because, God is not affected by them. God is always to be found; and faith is always sure to find Him.

II. But, the same faith which enabled those holy men of old to refuse the king's meat; enabled them, also, to despise the king's image. They had separated themselves from defilement, in order that they might enjoy a more intense communion with the true God; and they

could not, therefore, bow down to an image of gold, even though it were ever so high. They knew, that God was not an image. They knew He was a reality. They could only present worship to Him, for He alone was the true object thereof.

Nor did it make any matter to them, that all the world was against them. They had only to live and act for God. It might seem, as if they were setting up to be wiser than their neighbours. It might savour of presumption, to stand against the tide of public opinion. Some might feel disposed to ask, if truth lay only with them? Were, all "the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces" sunk in darkness and error? Could it be possible, that so many men of rank, of intelligence, and of learning, were in the wrong, and only a few strangers of the captivity in the right?

With such questions our Nazarites had nothing to do. Their path lay right onward. Should they bow down, and worship an image, in order to avoid the appearance of condemning other people! Assuredly not. And yet, how often are those, who desire to keep a conscience void of offence in the sight of God, condemned for setting themselves up, and judging others! Doubtless, Luther was condemned by many for setting himself up in opposition to the doctors, the cardinals, and the pope. Should he, in order to avoid such condemnation, have lived and died in error? Who would say so?

"Ah! but," some will reply, "Luther had to deal with palpable error." So thought Luther; but thousands of learned and eminent men thought otherwise. So also, in the case of "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," they had to do with positive idolatry; but the whole world differed from them, What then? "We must obey God rather than man." "Let others do as they will; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If people were to remain in error, and continue to do what they, at least, feel to be wrong, in order to avoid the appearance of judging others, where should we be?

Ah! no; my beloved reader, do you seek to pursue

the steady, onward, upward path of pure and elevated discipleship. And, whether or not you, thereby, condemn others, is no concern of yours. "CEASE TO DO EVIL." This is the first thing for the true disciple to do. When he has yielded obedience to this golden precept, he may expect to "learn to do well." "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." When God speaks, I am not to turn round, to see how my obedience to His voice will affect my neighbours, or, to consider, what they will think about me. When the voice of the risen and glorified Jesus fell upon the ear of the prostrate Saul of Tarsus, he did not begin to enquire, what the chief priest and pharisees would think of him, were he to obey. Surely not. "Immediately," he says, "I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. i. 16.) "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 19.) This is the true spirit and principle of discipleship. "Give glory to God, before he cause darkness, and your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." Nothing can be more dangerous, than to hesitate, when divine light shines upon the path. If you do not act upon the light, when you get it, you will, assuredly, be involved in thick darkness. Hence, therefore, as another has said, "Never go before your faith, nor lag behind your conscience."

III. But, we have said, if our Nazarites refused to bow before the king's image, they had to encounter the king's rage, and the king's furnace. For all this they were, by the grace of God, prepared: their Nazariteship was a real thing; they were ready to suffer the loss of all things, and even life itself, in defence of the true worship of the God of Israel. "They worshipped and served their own God," not merely beneath the peaceful vine and fig-tree in the land of Canaan, but in the very face of "a burning fiery furnace." They acknowledged Jehovah, not merely in the midst of a congregation of true worshippers, but in the presence of an opposing world. Theirs was a true discipleship in an evil day. They loved the Lord; and, therefore, for His sake, they abstained from the king's luxuries; they withstood the king's rage; and they endured the king's furnace.

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” This was the language of men who knew whose they were, and where they were—of men who had calmly and deliberately counted the cost—of men to whom the Lord was everything, the world nothing. All that the world could offer, together with life itself, was at stake; but what of that? “They endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” Eternal glory lay before them; and they were quite prepared to reach that glory by a fiery pathway. God can take His servants to heaven by a chariot of fire, or by a furnace of fire, as seems good to Him. Whatever be the mode of going, it is well to get there.

But, could not the Lord have preserved His beloved servants from being cast into the furnace? No doubt. This would have been but a very small matter to Him. He did not, however, do so: it was His will that the faith of His servants should be put to the test—should be tried in the furnace—should be passed through the most searching crucible, in order that it “might be found to praise and honor and glory.” Is it because the refiner sets no value on the wedge of gold, that he puts it into the furnace? No; but because he does. And, as some one has beautifully remarked, “his object is not merely to remove the dross, but to brighten the metal.”

It is very evident that, had the Lord, by an act of *power*, kept His servants out of the furnace, there would have been less glory to Him, and, as a consequence, less blessing to them. It was far better to have His presence and sympathy in the furnace, than His power to keep them out of it. What glory to Him in this! And what unspeakable privilege to them! The Lord went down and walked *with* His Nazarites in the furnace into which their faithfulness had brought them. They had walked with God in the king’s palace; and God walked with them in the king’s furnace. This was the most elevated

moment in the entire career of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. How little had the king imagined the lofty position in which he was placing the objects of his rage and fury! Every eye was turned from the great image of gold, to gaze, in astonishment, upon the three captives. What could it mean? “Three men *bound!*” “Four men *loose!*” Could it be real? Was the furnace real? Alas! “the most mighty men in the king’s army” had proved it to be real. And, had Nebuchadnezzar’s image been cast into it, it would have proved its reality also. There was no material for the sceptic or the infidel to work upon. It was a real furnace, and a real flame, and the “three men” were “bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments.” All was reality.

But there was a deeper reality: *God was there.* This changed every thing: it “changed the king’s word”—changed the furnace into a place of high and holy fellowship—changed Nebuchadnezzar’s bondsmen into God’s free men.

God was there! There, in His power, to write contempt upon all man’s opposition; there, in His deep and tender sympathy with His tried and faithful servants; there, in His matchless grace, to set the captives free, and to lead the hearts of His Nazarites into that deep fellowship with Himself for which they so ardently thirsted.

And, my beloved reader, is it not worth passing through a fiery furnace to enjoy a little more of the presence of Christ, and the sympathy of His loving heart? Are not fetters, with Christ, better than jewels without Him? Is not a furnace where He is, better than a palace where He is not? Nature says, “*No!*” Faith says, “*Yes!*”

It is well to bear in mind, that this is not the day of Christ’s *power*; but it is the day of His *sympathy*. When passing through the deep waters of affliction, the heart may, at times, feel disposed to ask, “Why does not the Lord display His power, and deliver me?” The answer is, This is not the day of His power. He could avoid that sickness—He could remove that difficulty—He could take off that pressure—He could prevent that catastrophe—He could preserve that beloved and fondly

cherished object from the cold grasp of death. But, instead of putting forth His power to deliver, He allows things to run their course, and pours His own sweet sympathy into the oppressed and riven heart, in such a way as to elicit the acknowledgment, that we would not, for worlds, have missed the trial, because of the abundance of the consolation.

Such, my reader, is the manner of our Jesus, just now. By and by, He will display His power; He will come forth as the Rider on the white horse; He will unsheath His sword; He will make bare His arm; He will avenge His people, and right their wrongs for ever. But now, His sword is sheathed, His arm covered. This is the time for making known the deep love of His heart, not the power of His arm, nor the sharpness of His sword. Are you satisfied to have it so? Is Christ's sympathy enough for your heart, even amid the keenest sorrow, and the most intense affliction? The restless heart, the impatient spirit, the unmortified will, would lead one to long for escape from the trial, the difficulty, or the pressure; but this would never do. It would involve incalculable loss. We must pass from form to form in the school; but the Master accompanies us, and the light of His countenance, and the tender sympathy of His heart, sustain us under the most severe exercises.

And, then, see what glory redounds to the name of the Lord, when His people are enabled, by His grace, to pass, triumphantly, through a trial! Read Daniel iii. 26—28, and say where you could find richer or rarer fruits of a faithful discipleship. The king and all his nobles, who, just before, had been wholly engrossed with the bewitching music and the false worship, are now occupied with the amazing fact, that the fire, which had slain the mighty men, had taken no effect whatever upon the worshippers of the true God, save to consume their fetters and let them walk free, in company with the Son of God. "Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, YE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, *saw these men*, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them."

Here, then, was a noble testimony—such a testimony as would never have been rendered, had the Lord, by a mere act of power, preserved His servants from being cast into the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was furnished with a striking proof that his furnace was no more to be dreaded than his image was to be worshipped by "the servants of the most high God." In a word, the enemy was confounded; God was glorified; and His dear servants brought forth unscathed from "the burning fiery furnace." Precious fruits, these, of a faithful Nazarite-ship.

And, observe, further, the honour put upon our Nazarites. "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be *the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*." Their names are intimately associated with the God of Israel. This was a high honour. They had identified themselves with the true God when it was a matter of life and death to do so; and, therefore, the true God identified Himself with them, and led them forth into a large and wealthy place. He set their feet upon a rock, and lifted their heads up above their enemies round about them. How true it is, that, "them that honour me I will honour!" And it is equally true, that, "they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. ii. 30).

My beloved reader, have you found settled, divine peace for your guilty conscience, in the perfected atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you simply taken God at His word? Have you set to your seal that God is true? If so, you are a Child of God; your sins are *all* forgiven, and you are accepted as righteous in Christ; heaven, with all its untold glories, is before you; you are as sure of being in the glory as Christ Himself, inasmuch as you are united to Him.

Thus, everything is settled for you, for time and eternity, according to the very utmost desire of your heart. Your need is met—your guilt removed—your peace

established—your title sure. You have nought to do for yourself. All is divinely finished.

What remains? Just this: LIVE FOR CHRIST! You are left here, for “a little while,” to occupy for Him, and wait for His appearing. Oh! seek to be faithful to your blessed Master. Be not discouraged by the fragmentary state of everything around you. Let the case of Daniel and his honoured companions encourage your heart to seek after an elevated course here below. It is your privilege to enjoy as much of companionship with the blessed Lord Jesus, as if you were cast amid the palmy days of apostolic testimony.

May the Holy Ghost enable the writer and the reader of these lines to drink into the spirit—walk in the footsteps—manifest the graces—and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

C. H. M.

FRAGMENTS.

1. THE KEYS.—The key has, from of old, been the symbol of authority (Is. xx. 22) and power (Job xii. 14; Rev. iii. 7). In this sense, a mountain-pass, or a strait of the sea, is sometimes, even in modern language, called the key of a kingdom. Possess it, and the whole that lies within is yours. There is harmony of ideas, too, in applying it to a house; he that has the key of a house is the master. But there seems no congruity, no sense, in applying it to the human body. In it the head has all the directive power; and in that spiritual body, of which Christ is the Head, it is so also.

2. A creature, as such, ought to keep *its first estate*, as assigned to it by God. No creature, because a spirit, had the right to leave its first estate (Jude 6) any more than had Adam to leave his. When the Creator sets what He has created in a given sphere, that is its estate. But the Son of God had the right and title to leave any sphere, for He is God. Yet when (Phil. ii.) He left the divine glory on high, it was in the perfect character of one, taking a new sphere, as entirely subserving the glory and will of God and the Father. His having the right to leave the divine glory on high, to become seed of the woman, proved that He was God; and the object with which He left it, and His whole way afterwards proclaimed the same.

N^o. IX.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

“WANT of subjection to God”—is, in every creature in whom it is found, *Sin*. I intentionally say, *want* of subjection, or *the absence* of subjection (*i. e.*, *non*-subjection, which is *negative*); and I do not say *in*-subjection: because, to many minds, *in*-subjection would seem something positive. But the absence of subjection is *sin*, without its being needful to prove the positive presence of any activity of rebellion, or any act of rebellion whatever.

It is written concerning *man*, “The wages of sin is *death*.” We know from Scripture that to man^a death has two parts: there is, 1st, the death of the body, when the mortal life ceases to animate it; and there is, 2ndly, hereafter, the second death. Moral death (as men speak) is *sin* indwelling. To touch a certain tree in Eden was the expression of man’s independence toward God. I can think with awe and dread of the touching it, without *sin* or moral death; but when the will to touch it was once formed, there was *sin*; and when Eve had touched it, there was moral death. The judgment of this *sin* was death of the body, and after that the judgment and second death, of the whole race who might descend from Adam and Eve.

Why do men fear death? I cannot answer this question, in full here — a few words must suffice. An honest infidel (if such a thing can exist) told me that “death was as a black curtain across his path, and was ever there

^a That “By *sin* came death;” that “The wages of *sin* is death,” etc., was said of man, who had been made a *living* soul, with power to recognise God as the Source and Giver of all good, is clear. Animals and vegetables are not upon the same footing as man as to death; God has not put them upon the same grade in creation as He placed man.

The Fear of Death.

before him, telling him that he was worse off, by trusting to reason, than the Christian, by trusting to faith; for reason was at a dead stand before death. Faith could walk through it, and know what was on the other side." To intelligent nature, death must be a fearful thing; because death is the judgment which God spake of as the result of man's transgression. And to unintelligent nature, it is very humbling to be not only exposed to the attacks of a strong adversary, who cannot be guarded against, or set aside and sent away, and who is gradually gleaning away, to the bottomless sack behind him, the generation to which we belong.

To him that has God's word in his hand, death is known to be a just act of the judgment of God, by reason of sin, and that it has an arrear of details behind it in the second death.

When the Christian doctrine is known and received of a new nature communicated to each believer, and of the present connection of him that has it with Christ, as a living person now in heaven, — everything as to death is changed.

Nature's view and faith's view of death must differ; because the testimony of God as to what death is, in itself, and, to a man in nature, is the opposite of what His testimony is as to what death is to a believer in Christ. Observe —

1st. There is an *essential* difference between a believer, on the one hand, and, on the other, Adam, as set in his first estate in Eden, together with all those who have no higher nature than he had; and,

2ndly. The basis, or ground of standing, of the two are contrasted —

Man was a *living soul*, that knew God as the Giver ;

and

his basis, or ground of standing, was obedience.

Alas !

his race are all dead in soul, and ascribe to themselves what is due to God alone.

The believer is *quicken*ed in the Spirit ; one Spirit with the Lord,

and

stands in and together with Christ.

Happily,

Christ was, now is, and will be FOR him; and the Spirit of Christ dwells in him.

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I do not admit that death is the wages of sin, to a believer, in any sense whatever. As a man, I was upon the ground of nature. Christ found me there, and undertook for me. His whole work, as finished ere He rose, went to settle all *that* for me. He had paid all; and He cried, "It is finished!" ere He gave up the ghost. When He rose from the grave, He rose as a Head; and the purpose of grace concerning me has now been fulfilled, for I know and believe that I rose together with Him. Does the death of believers enter into the debt to be paid? Surely not. For if the death of *one* of them was needful, as part payment, then, also, the death of all of them. But all will not die, but a great part be changed. And if I have to pay *part* of the penalty, then the penalty is not paid already by Christ, and grace is no more grace; nor am I upon the ground of being in Christ Jesus at all, but I am still upon the ground of being in Adam, and a debtor. Well! but shall I not die? Do not you see believers dying all around you? No; *never*. I shall not die. If the tabernacle be taken down, that will not kill *me*. *I myself, a man in Christ*, can go through the death of this body *cheerfully*, Christ cheering me as one, through grace, associated with Himself; just as I can go through all the sorrows of the wilderness *as a Christian*, and not only as a man. I do not see that the new man — the man in Christ — ever dies.

The Christ who stood for me, as my substitute, in His death, has, by the faith He has given to me in His work there, and in Himself, as alive from the dead, enabled me to know that the whole score that stood against me has been cleared off; and not only so, but myself put upon an entirely other ground than that I was upon before; not now in Adam, where all die, but in Christ, where all are made alive. I am not now under broken law, nor before a God who is demanding of a ruined creature the payment of his debts, and the enduring of the penalties of sin. I am in the wilderness where Christ once was, but I am there as being already a redeemed one, and in communion with Him, who is now

for me in heaven. If I am to pass through death,^b the first question will then be, *By what death I shall glorify God* (a very different thought from that of nature)? and the second, *How much shall I gain by the death of my body?* "for to live is Christ, and to die is gain," to the Christian, at least.

If, indeed, I walk here below after the flesh, and according to it, I shall find (believer though I am) that I am in the wilderness, as Israel was; but if I walk after the Spirit, and according to it, I shall find the wilderness is to me what it was to Christ. Faith would make me taste it *as* Christ tasted it. Experience as a man would make me taste it as Israel tasted it. Two very different ways of tasting it. If in the wilderness, then I have already passed through the Red Sea. It may be that little faith may have a great deal to relate of long experiences made! and awful ones, too! ere it knew *where* it was, and *how* it had passed through the sea. But at whose cost, and toil, and labour, was that boundary mark between Egypt and the wilderness passed by Israel? Surely their God was at charges for them altogether, and none other. And what shall *we* say as to what *we did*, or suffered, in the redemption which our God wrought out in Christ Jesus, and revealed to us?

Is Jordan a worse stream than the Red Sea? or who has ever been called to cross it at his own charges? or why lingered the hearts of the two and a-half tribes on this side of the river? Did they wisely so to choose?

The pestilence, or famine, or war, sweep o'er the earth. The wave of Death rolls in upon a man who is in nature; it finds him in nature, with nothing in him which is beyond nature. It takes its course (say), and *he* dies: it comes next to a believer. But here another question

^b A man in nature (or merely as a descendant of Adam), could not talk of *passing through death*. He himself was to die. The Christian passes through death. Death is his; it pays him, as a Christian, tribute; he is in all things more than conqueror; the victory in death is already his, in Christ. But a man in nature is under death; pays tribute to it in the most awful way; is conquered and vanquished by it.

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arises, viz., not only who is it that has the power of death (that is, the devil), but “that one,” says Christ, “is one of my sheep, I gave my life for it.” Has Satan — has death — any title which is above Christ’s? No; none. Suppose, however, that the time be come for that individual to glorify God by being stoned to death — by being nailed to a cross head downwards. If he that has the power of death is hailing a storm of stones on Stephen, He that has the power of *life* is there too. A saint is not like an ordinary man; he cannot be killed till Christ, as Prince of Life, acts. Death may roll in, under a general and a particular providence, among men as mere men. But a saint has to go on high; the life — well-spring of life, eternal life — in him, opened there by Christ, and fed by Christ every moment, can neither be stopped up by the enemy, nor can the thread of life be cut off by him. Satan cannot do it. It needs Christ to gather up the life to Himself.

Jesus of Nazareth, alive again from the dead, and owned in heaven as Lord of all and Christ; and, proof thereof, the believer down here consciously in possession of a life in and from Him; — these are the two great points as to freedom from the fear of death.

I believe that the common expression, that death is the portal into eternity, is a very erroneous one. This life, to a mere man, is the portal: as the tree falleth, so shall it lie. But to the believer, eternal life has been given to him, and he has been already introduced, really, though by faith, into the presence of God and of Christ. Christ, in the glory of the place where He is, has made Himself known, with life-giving power, to me, or I am not a Christian. For he that does not know Jesus Christ risen from the dead is none of His. I have no doubt that the expression referred to, and similar ones, are among the means used by Satan to confuse the thoughts of Christians.

P.S. The *hope* of many seems defective. They speak as if they hoped to wait on earth until the Lord comes down to it. Such is not *my* hope, as a heavenly Christian.

Faith reveals to me Christ as Son of God, now upon the Father’s throne. I, on earth, have enjoyed Him there, as did

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Paul when he was here. So does he *now* also, that, absent from the body, he is present with the Lord. Until He leaves the place where He is, there will be this enjoyment; to *many* in His presence, and to some few upon earth. When I speak of Hope, my hope, like my faith, has Him as the substance of it. I being in the body, my *faith* lays hold of Him, and of *who* and *what* He is, and *where* He now is; the very things which I should taste (only the more fully and without let) if I were absent from the body and with Him. *Hope* views Him, not as in His present position, but in a *future* one* *Hope* has Christ in what is *to Him* a future position for its substance: it must be so, for the Spirit in us views things, not according to our feelings, but according to Christ. He has to rise up from the position in which He now is, in order to enter into those heavenly courts which form part of the redemption-spheres. So far as I can see, He conducts with Him, in His train, the company of blessed ones who have been absent from the body and present with Him. That the dead in Christ shall rise first, is true; yet will it be but a moment, but the twinkling of an eye, that the power, which is in Him, will take to cause the corruptible to put on incorruption, and the mortal to put on immortality. They that sleep will be first, but the rest follow close after; one blessed crowd, though it have its front-line and its rear-line.

The way that some shrink from *being present with the Lord*, and cleave to *being absent from Him*, is strange!

Do they find that all in them is so perfectly homogeneous with the glory to come, that they would harmonise with it in body, soul, and spirit, just as they are, if He came? How, then, not be happy with Himself where He is?

Is it that they have no taste for solitude with Christ, so that they know not how to trust themselves all alone to Him? Or is there, to His lovers, nothing attractive in His being where He is? Or are Peter, James, and John in a lower condition than they were in when they were pilgrims on earth?

The quiet experience of Christ, as pilot of my soul, is not strange to me. He is to choose for me, and He is to be trusted, which ever way He leads. Who knows the straits of death so well as He, or how to comfort a Stephen therein? The passage through the veil is a pass well known to faith, and neither did Christ—the living Christ—ever yet fail me; nor are the courts of heaven, as a *terra incognita*, afar, afar off, with a wide sea between.

What it is, I know not; but I do fear that, in many, in this respect, things that are seen, and can be seen, have a stronger hold upon them than things which are spiritual and but the objects of faith. Or is it that, like Jacob at Jabbok, they can send their all over the *little* brook, but not pass over themselves until their flesh has been crippled?

* I would not admit that Paul's hope, as a Christian, was realised by being absent from the body and present with the Lord, though, in a human sense, Paul did long for that.

N^o. X.

2 TIMOTHY.

THE second Epistle to Timothy has a very peculiar character. It is the expression of his heart who, outside Palestine, had, under God, founded and built the Church of God on earth, and it was written in sight of its failure, and its departure from the principles on which he had established it. God remained faithful; His foundation was sure and immoveable; but the work committed into the hands of men, was already enfeebled and decaying. The consciousness of this state of things, which moreover betrayed itself in the way in which the apostle himself was then forsaken, oppressed his heart, and he pours it out into the bosom of his faithful Timothy. By this means, the Spirit instructs us in the solemn truth, that the Church has not kept its first estate, and sets before us the ways of safety for those who seek God, and desire to please Him, in such a state of things as this.

The apostle John gives the history of the fall of the Church here below, and of its judgment, and that of the world likewise. He also sets before us a life, which, apart from all question of the Church's condition, abides ever the same, which renders us capable of enjoying God, and makes us resemble Him in His nature and character.

As a witness, John was to remain until the Lord came; but Paul sees for himself the ruin of that which he had built and watched over so faithfully. He had spent himself for the Church, accomplishing that which was left of the sufferings of Christ; and he had to see that which he had so much loved, which he had cared for, even as a mother cherishes her nurseling, which he had planted as God's plant on the earth, grow feeble as

spoken of outwardly, as the great house, it contains vessels to dishonour, from which we are to purge ourselves. Yet the apostle foresaw a still worse state of things—which has now set in. But the Lord can never fail in His faithfulness.

I BOW me to Thy will, O God !
 And all Thy ways adore,
 And every day I live, I'd seek
 To please Thee more and more.

Thy will the end, the blessèd rule
 Of Jesu's toil and tears ;
 Thy will the passion of His heart,
 Those three and thirty years.

And He hath breathed into my soul,
 A special love to Thee,
 A love — to lose my will in Thine,
 And by that loss be free.

I love to see Thee bring to nought
 The plans of wily men ;
 When simple hearts outwit the wise,
 O Thou art loveliest then !

The headstrong world, it presses hard
 Upon the Church full oft ;
 But then how easily Thou turnst
 The hard ways into soft.

I love to kiss each print where Christ
 Did set His pilgrim feet ;
 Nor can I fear that blessèd path,
 Whose traces are so sweet.

When obstacles, and trials seem
 Like prison walls to be,
 I do the little I can do,
 And leave the rest to Thee.

I know not what it is to doubt ;
 My heart is ever gay ;
 I run no risk, for, come what will,
 Thou always hast Thy way.

(Continued, page 185.)

N^o XI.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE
 COMING [*παρουσια*] OF CHRIST TO RECEIVE
 HIS SAINTS, AND HIS APPEARING [*επιφανεια*]
 IN GLORY WITH THEM.

It has been supposed that the word of God affords very little, if any direct, proof in support of the idea of any real difference, and that all that can be offered in its favour is in the way of inference of a rather loose and uncertain character.

The aim of this paper will be to shew, that we have as full and as complete evidence in its behalf as can be produced for almost any Scriptural truth.

This evidence is of three kinds:—

1st. That of direct statement.

2ndly. That of fair and legitimate inference.

3rdly. That of the general consent and harmony of Scripture with it; whilst such systems of interpretation as do not admit of it, are utterly irreconcilable with many of its well-known principles, and involve a violation of the divine order which pervades it.

This being done it will appear that the supposition alluded to above, arises either from this evidence not having been brought into sufficient prominence and stated with sufficient clearness; or its not having received from Christians generally the attention and consideration it deserves, whether from inadvertence, or perhaps, in some cases, from want of proper appreciation of the truth.

This evidence will be adduced, not necessarily in the order above given, but as it presents itself naturally in

the Scriptures treated of; and the reader will judge for himself to which head each argument properly belongs.^a

The enquiry itself is evidently of the utmost importance to the Church of God; as, upon the reply which the Word of God gives to it, depend both the position and duty of the Church whilst here on earth. If her absent Lord may return at any hour or moment, and this is really felt by the soul, fidelity of heart to Him, and, if that is wanting, the fear of being found unprepared will dispose to watchfulness until He comes. Whereas, if a variety of events are revealed as intervening previously, the fulfilment of which renders it impossible the Lord should come for a considerable period of time, He will not be waited for in the same way; His coming will be viewed as at some distance, and the practical effect of that uncertainty upon the mind, which the Lord Himself so often insists upon, will be very much weakened, if not destroyed. No one, if told that seven years or more must elapse before the Lord's return, would feel it to be the same thing, or as necessary to be prepared, as if warned that He might return before the dawn of another day. Hence the power of this expectation to separate from the world, to fix the heart on heavenly things, or to comfort it in sorrow, is certainly greatly enfeebled.

If this consideration is carefully weighed, it will go a long way towards making those who regard with reverence the expressed directions and commands of the Saviour, mistrustful of any system of interpretation which *of necessity* puts his coming at a distance. Nothing can be clearer than His exhortations to His disciples to watch and to be always on the look-out for His return, at whatever time of the night, *i.e.*, of this present period, it might occur. Again and again, He presses on them that they should be "like unto men that wait for their

^a Some of the statements will, perhaps, at first sight appear to assume what has yet to be established. This arises from its being almost impossible, when treating of subjects which form parts of a whole, to handle them so as to avoid involving other parts which have not previously been considered. In this case, the evidence for what is apparently taken for granted, will be found at some subsequent page.

Lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately, *e.g.*, Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching And *if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants*" (Luke xii. 36—38; Matt. xxv. 1—13, etc.) The moment the servant began to say in His heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming," he became negligent and unfaithful in the discharge of his duties (Luke xii.; Matt, xxiv.), and the whole Church in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, is represented as only recovering its true position, though it had originally set out with the thought of meeting the Bridegroom, when it is re-awakened to this blessed expectation, by the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him!" (Matt. xxv.)

In the Epistles, the saints are invariably presented, in accordance with these directions, as incessantly looking for Jesus to come again. "Ye turned to God from idols," says the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, "to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for His Son from heaven*" (1 Thes. i. 9, 10). To those, also, at Philippi he writes, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. iii. 20). Such was their expectation, and such their position, as described by the apostle himself in these and many other passages. Does it seem consistent with this to suppose, that they were anticipating the previous fulfilment of all the scenes of judgment described in the Apocalypse — the return of the Jews to their own land — their establishment there — the manifestation and rule of Antichrist, and the seven years the Jewish nation has to pass through in connection with Him — besides other events, too numerous to be mentioned here? Would that be looking for Him from heaven; and could they be said to be doing so, if they had to wait for the successive unfolding of all these events ere they could possibly see Him again? These are questions which we should ask at the very threshold of this enquiry, before we allow ourselves to entertain any views so subversive of

the evident intentions and directions of our blessed Lord and His apostles.

We will proceed to examine some passages which may throw further light upon these points.

When about to leave His disciples to return to the Father, our blessed Lord told them (John xiv.) that He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house; and gave them the cheering promise, that if He did so, He would come again and receive them to Himself, that where He was they might be also. This was to fix their hopes, and fill their hearts with desire; they were to have a home, but it was to be His own home, prepared also by Himself, and to be enjoyed with Him whose love was about to procure them this blessed place in it. It was not with the display and glory of the kingdom that Jesus here sought to comfort them, but with something far more sweet and attractive to the renewed heart. It was to the Father and the Father's house that Jesus Himself was going, as He says, "whither I go ye know and the way ye know;" and "whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." And this is the place to which He pledges Himself, to come and take them. There is nothing here about reigning over the earth, though that we know will take place also in its season; but the coming of the Lord for the saints is put in clear and definite connection with their removal to the Father's house, and His coming is for the accomplishment of that purpose; so that in considering that blessed event we must leave room for the translation of the saints to the Father's house, as the first act which the Lord has *given us* in connection with His return.

If the fulfilment of their expectation does not take place at once, it must be asked, "When and how can it be accomplished, seeing it is not certainly a momentary thing, is it to be indefinitely postponed, or are we to reign over the earth, and exercise the dignities we possess as sons, before being presented to the Father as the children He has loved—before we enjoy the home which is to be common to us, and to Jesus for ever?" What moment can be found so suitable as this with

which it is here associated, if, indeed, any other can be found at all before the Millennium is terminated? Certainly the language used by the Lord would naturally lead us to expect, that we shall at once be taken to our home on His return, and that He comes to take us there, and not merely up into the air, and down again to the earth, without going there at all.

The further examination of Scripture will shew, that what is here only intimated, is elsewhere expressed with great distinctness. In 1 Thess. iv. 15—17, the Lord is said to descend from heaven into *the air* with a shout;^b and from thence He summons His saints, the dead and the living to join Him, who, being raised and changed respectively, are caught up together in the clouds; and united as one body, ascend above them to meet Him who has called them, and who awaits them in the air. The words here used “to meet the Lord in the air,” do not imply anything more than that the desire and action are mutual. He has descended from heaven for us, and we ascend to Him, attracted by His blessed presence, and quickened by His power. We learn from this, that the Lord remains in the air whilst these things are taking place, and until the whole Church has reached Him.

Here, then, is nothing but what has reference to the saints—nothing that indicates His appearance to the world, or His actings towards it—nothing of His coming *with clouds* or flaming fire, or even of accompanying angels. There is no trace of any descent to the earth, or that He has anything in view at this moment but His saints and their removal. The Holy Ghost only adds, “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” Our future is lost in that of the blessed Saviour, who has thus come from heaven to call us up to Himself, that so we might ever be *with* Him. Where He will be subsequently, we learn from other Scriptures.

This heavenly event having taken place, the Apostle

^b The word here translated “shout” *κελευσμα*, is a military term, and signifies the word of command which a general gives to his troops. It is accompanied by the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, which last is not for the living inhabitants of the world, but to raise the sleeping saints from their graves. “The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. xv. 52).

proceeds quite in a different strain, and as if opening quite another subject (ch. v. 1, etc.): “But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.” Why not, if these relate to the fulfilment of their hopes? Had not the Lord, when on earth, taught His disciples to pay particular regard to the progress of events on earth; events, moreover, connected with the ushering in the day of the Lord, which is here in question, and making use of the very same language in describing its suddenness, and the judgment that would accompany it? Of the “times and seasons” the Lord then gave full explanation, and called their careful attention to them, that they might watch the successive steps which indicate the near approach of the time of their deliverance. The wars and rumours of wars—the abomination of desolation—the time of unequalled trouble—the signs in the heavens—all these things (as the budding of the fig-tree shews that summer is nigh) are to tell them that the time is drawing near for the manifestation of the Son of man. But here the apostle will not dwell upon such things, as he would surely have done had they concerned them; he does not engage them to watch the times and seasons, for they are to be satisfied with knowing the general fact of the way in which the day will appear—for this reason, that they are the children of the light and *of the day*, and belong not to the night, nor to the darkness of this world, which the day comes to judge and disperse. Forming a part of the day which comes from heaven upon the earth, it cannot come without them, still less can it overtake them. So (in Matt. xiii.) they are said to “shine forth as the sun,” which brings the day with it, reflecting the glory of Christ in the kingdom of their Father.^c How different is this thought

^c This difference may be further illustrated, by comparing this passage with what is stated in Malachi: “Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings.” The glorified saints who accompany the Lord when He comes, form a part of the rays of his glory, and shine forth like the sun when it appears, forming a part of its light, whilst it shines upon those who are on the earth, and also, being there, must wait the gradual dawning of the day.

from that of slowly and painfully watching the gradual approach, by the progressive fulfilment of the events which precede it. It cannot break upon them as it will upon this world, nor can it appear without them, for they form part and parcel of it; and when it unfolds its brightness, they are seen as part of that light which it displays; and that this may be the case, they must previously be removed, or it would appear without them, and they would be overtaken by it.

No wonder the apostle should think it sufficient to say, instead of entering upon the times and seasons, "Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief; ye are all the children of the light and the *children of the day*. He could not have put in a stronger or more striking light the groundlessness of their fears, that they would be overtaken by the day when it came; for all that constitutes the day could not be confounded with the earth and its inhabitants on whom it dawns, nor the light with the darkness, day with night, heaven with the earth, or the sun with what it shines upon. The language he employs is far more forcible than it would have been had he entered into details of events that had transpired previously; nor was that needful after the explanation in the preceding chapter concerning their removal.

He gives only the grand conclusion of the whole in the day of the Lord, and what the place of the saints will be in that day. It is remarkable, that the Lord Himself, in like manner, after His *resurrection*, refuses to enter into the question of the times and seasons with His disciples (Acts i. 6—11), though He tells them of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the testimony they were to bear upon earth in his behalf. The words to which this refusal is the reply are also very important, as they shew us to what these "times and seasons" relate. The disciples ask, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again *the kingdom to Israel?*" He answers, "It is not for *you* to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power" — thus distinctly connecting the times and seasons with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel and, at the same time, that He will not enter

upon the progress of events on earth which are to bring about the kingdom, they are directed to look forward to the moment when He shall "come in like manner as they had seen Him go into heaven." Of this, which relates to themselves, and His return for them, they are informed; whilst their inquiry respecting the setting up of His earthly government in connection with Israel, is left unanswered. Thus distinguishing clearly enough these two events.

How is it, we may ask, that the Lord's instructions after His resurrection differ so widely from those that went before it? and that He says now to His disciples, in words not to be mistaken, "It is not for *you* to know the times and the seasons"? How is it that the apostle Paul pursues the same line of instruction, and, though giving the Thessalonian saints full information about the translation of the Church and its heavenly hopes, considers it superfluous for him to write to them about the times and the seasons? The reason is this: that to be taken to heaven, and to enjoy our blessing there, we do not need any fulfilment of the times before appointed, and accomplishment of the counsels of God respecting the earth; whilst those whose expectations are connected with the establishment of the kingdom on earth, and the blessing it will be brought into, must wait and watch, till Israel and the earth have gone through all their appointed trials. That kingdom cannot be set up till Antichrist is overthrown, and the entire course of events predicted to happen on earth has run out. Hence, as a result of having earthly hopes (which in the case of those converted after the removal of the Church are quite legitimate), they must go through all the time of the closing sorrows of the earth; nor can their deliverance come before. In consequence of this, whilst all these signs are given for their guidance, and they are directed to look out for them one after the other, and comfort themselves by their progressive fulfilment, there is not *one* single passage, after the descent of the Holy Ghost to form the Church, from *Acts* to *Revelation* inclusive, which directs those who compose it to wait for those signs; but, on the contrary, the only allusions made to

them, as we have seen, either say they are not intended for them, or turn their attention from them, as not being the concern of saints, whose hopes are heavenly.

No right-minded Christian would think it strange that the Church should at any time be called upon to suffer for the name of Christ. The word of God everywhere presents such suffering as a privilege — an honourable distinction for those that are called to it. But to have to pass through the trouble which comes upon the world, in consequence of its unbelief and rejection of the Son of God, is quite another thing. The great tribulation foretold is the divine visitation for this very sin. From the beginning of the creation, the word of God tells us there has been nothing like it, nor ever will be (Mark xiii. 19, 20; Matt. xxiv. 21, 22). For the sake of those elect persons who are to enjoy the blessing of the earth under the peaceful rule of Christ, the days are shortened, or *no flesh* would be saved. In Rev. xii. 10, 12, the saints above rejoice that the accuser of their brethren is cast down, and add, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

Is it a privilege to pass through this “woe,” inflicted on those who have, for the sake of the enjoyment of this world, preferred its prince to Christ, and have voluntarily submitted to be misled by him? Is it not far happier to be with those who are rejoicing in heaven, and anticipating at this moment Satan’s final overthrow? Doubtless, the Church has failed in many things, especially in maintaining the glory of the Son of God, and in waiting for His return from heaven. But that she should have to go through the hour of the world’s tribulation, because it has rejected, and still continues to reject, the Saviour, would be, notwithstanding her failure, a thought unworthy of Him with whom she has to do, and to whom she belongs. Weak and erring as she is, she has assuredly believed in Him, loved Him, and owned Him as her Lord; whilst the world has refused either to trust Him or to submit to Him. Besides the deplorable state to which the few saints who survive the

dreadful persecution of Antichrist are reduced, would render it anything but desirable that the Church should be on earth during this period. If the days were not shortened, "no flesh would be saved"; because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold; and, finally, the Lord says Himself, though the saints are to be avenged speedily, yet, "when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" To such a condition, then, are the few remaining saints brought, that faith is almost extinguished. This language seems quite to forbid the thought of her being there, for it would imply that Christ would find spiritual life at the lowest state of depression, and scarcely have any Church to come for; an idea quite at variance with the teaching of other Scriptures, as Matt. xxv. 1 — 3, and elsewhere, and utterly irreconcilable with the fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost down here in the Church, who continues so long as she is on earth. But the positive promise given in the address to the Church at Philadelphia settles absolutely this point beyond all possibility of question: "*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*" This is a specific declaration, that, as the reward of waiting for Him, the Church should be kept from that grievous affliction of the world; and not only from it, but from "*the hour*" when it comes upon it. This cannot be but by her translation before its infliction. If she is on earth, she would evidently be in "*the hour*," even if she could be sheltered from the suffering — a thing scarcely possible from the position of the Church while on earth, and the prevalence of the judgment, which is declared to be universal. But the promise is distinctly that the Church shall be kept from "*the hour*" of its occurrence, which is far more, and involves evidently her removal beforehand.

In the book of the Revelation, we are naturally led to seek for evidence respecting the place and condition of the Church during the period in question — whether she is in heaven or on earth — whether risen and glorified, or still expectant; and also what character is borne by the saints who are alive on the earth at this time.

A well-known division of the contents of the book is given in ch. i., when the apostle is told to write, 1st, "the things that he has seen"; 2ndly, "the things that are"; 3rdly, "the things that shall be after these things" (*μετα ταυτα*). "The things that he has seen," refer evidently to the vision of ch. i.; "the things that are," to the seven churches who are addressed by the Lord; and "the things that shall be after these things," to the more distinctly prophetic part of the book, from ch. iv. to the close of it: the warrant for the application of these two last divisions being found in the 1st verse of ch. iv., "Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must be after these things"; for it is obvious, that, since the last head commences with ch. iv., "the things that are" can only apply to the immediate chapters and their contents. If these expressions, and the use the Holy Ghost makes of them, are weighed, some light will be thrown on the divisions of the book to which they are applied, and which they are intended to characterise. "The things that are," expressing the condition of the Church whilst on earth, unfold successive stages of its history during the present period. And though that may not be evident at first sight, yet from the character of the expression, "the things that are," and from that which follows, "things which shall be after these things," its application to the state of the Church on earth can hardly be doubted. Such a designation as "the things that are," including, as it does, in the natural meaning of the words, all that has an important existence in the mind of Christ on earth, would scarcely be used to represent only these few Churches in a small province of Asia Minor; so that it seems needful to give it some wider bearing. Added to this, all futurists, and to such only can this inquiry be useful, apply ch. iv. *et seq.* to what is yet future, and believe that the fulfilment of the rest of the book, *i. e.*, "the things that are to be after these," has not yet commenced. This requires the signification that has been assigned to "the things that are," as descriptive of the condition of the Church, or "the things that are to be *after them*" would have no meaning; for the words would be quite inappropriate if the long interval of time which

has existed between the original condition of the Seven Churches and the yet future fulfilment of the rest of the book were to intervene. Now, it is clear, that if there is this difference in these two parts of the book, as expressed in "the things that are, and the things that shall be after them," they cannot co-exist. Whilst "the things that are" are going on, "the things that are to be after them" cannot have begun. It is only when the first state of things has ceased, that the other can be accomplished. "The things that are" must have closed; and the Church can therefore be no longer on earth, when ch. iv. opens. And this we shall find harmonises with the remaining portion of the book.

In chaps. iv. and v., before the seals are opened, or any of the subsequent judgments inflicted, the saints are seen in the place for which God has destined them, in the counsels of His grace, under the figure of the twenty-four elders.

They are seated on thrones, around the throne of God, as kings and priests, in white raiment, and wearing crowns of gold on their heads. In chap. v., they have, in addition, harps and vials full of odours; they sing the praises of Him who has redeemed them out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and they anticipate a reign over the earth, which is yet future. All this marks them out as the Church. They have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and gathered from different parts of this earth. They are clearly not souls, for souls cannot sit on thrones or wear crowns, and when souls are spoken of in this book, they are distinctly specified as such (chap. vi. ver. 9, etc.); they are risen and glorified saints, in the full possession of that glory and those privileges, which Christ, in His love, has purchased for them.

It is, however, supposed by some, that this beautiful scene is anticipative. Of what is it anticipative? we would ask. Of something that will really take place, or not? Without doubt, it will be replied, to be literally fulfilled, as it is here given. If so, how, and where, and when, if not at that point of time, in the order of events, when it is related? How can the saints behold the Lamb take

the book, which He is to open, out of the hand of Him that sat on the throne—how can they praise Him *when* He does so, and as being worthy *to open* these seals—if they are not in heaven to witness this act, and never get there till all the seals have been opened, and the judgments they occasion have been accomplished? How, again, it may be asked, do they take their place *in heaven* on these thrones, and look forward to the reign of the saints over the earth, if they are to be translated after Christ has left heaven, having previously opened all the seals, and instead of returning with Him there, only join Him on His way to the earth, when He descends to reign and judge, when all that is here represented as taking place, is long passed? Where is there room, in such an idea, for the fulfilment of what is here pre-figured, in such a way as shall carry out the terms in which it is described?

These considerations will make it sufficiently appear, as it is most simple and natural from the narrative to suppose, and as the only way in which the passage can really be fulfilled, that the Church has been already translated to heaven, and taken her place there, to witness from thence the judgments that are being poured out on the earth, before she accompanies Christ when He comes to reign. Other passages might be adduced from the body of the book, in support of this view, but the most striking will be found in chap. xix. There, upon the overthrow and judgment of the woman, who is the apostate counterfeit of the Church; the marriage of the Lamb is described as taking place in heaven, with the marriage supper, and the blessing of those who are called to it. The Bride, the Lamb's wife, having made herself ready, and being suitably apparelled for it. Again, we may ask, How can this be, if she is not in heaven, and has not yet been taken there? It cannot take place whilst she is on earth, and absent from Christ; nor is there any opportunity for the fulfilment of what is here represented, if she only meets Christ after He has commenced his descent to reign. Besides, we should then have the strange anomaly of a Bride, invested with the public dignities and honours which belong to her as

such, and displayed in the exercise of them, before she is in the enjoyment of the relationship from which they all spring; reigning with Christ as His Bride, before she has been united to Him, and taking her place with Him in public glory, before she has tasted those personal joys and rights, which His own love has given her in Himself.

But the verses that follow, afford us most conclusive proof to the contrary, and that the Church is *in heaven* at this time. The apostle sees "*heaven opened,*" and Christ coming forth in triumph to judge under the figure of the rider on the white horse; and, he adds, "*the armies which were in heaven, followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*" We know that these are the saints, who thus share in the triumph of Christ, by their being clothed with white linen, which has just before been declared to be the righteousness of the saints, with which it was granted to the Bride to be arrayed previous to the marriage. It is certain that the saints could not follow Christ *out of heaven*, which is thus opened to make way for their descent, if they were not *in it*, and had not been before translated to it. So that had we no other passage to bring forward, this is of itself sufficient to establish that an interval of time must exist between the removal of the Church, and its return with Christ to judge and to reign, during which interval it is in heaven. It must be evident to any one who believes in a future fulfilment of the scenes described in Rev. iv.—xix., that the present employment of Christ is not that of opening seals, which bring down the judgments of God on those dwelling on the earth, nor are they like it: that action marks a period when there is an entire change in the divine procedure, the grace of God in the Gospel is no longer flowing out as it does now; but all that comes from the throne of God is judgment, or proclamation of judgment. God is about to take possession of the earth, and, before doing so, inflicts all these visitations on those who have despised His grace, accompanied with warnings of the personal Advent of the Son of Man. Hence, the testimony that is borne is no longer to the absolute grace

of God towards sinners, but to God's claims upon the earth, which He is about to enforce in the person of Christ, and to which these judgments witness. From this, arises, in great measure, the persecution which the servants of God have to undergo, and which this book relates; for, whilst the gospel, proclaimed whilst the Church is on earth, testifies of God's love to the sinner, and that He is gathering out a people for heaven, leaving in abeyance the title-rights of Christ to this earth, the declaration that God is about to take possession of it, with the accompanying signs of His doing so, arouses all the enmity of the natural heart of man against God; as of old, when Christ was present, they said; "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours." In other words, the dealing of God and of Christ being changed, the moment He takes the book, and begins to open the seals, a corresponding change takes place in the character of the testimony borne, and its effect upon the minds of men who hear it.

So much is this the case, that as the effect of opening one of the seals, men call on the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. At the present moment, it is the grace of the Lamb, and the blood of the Lamb, that Christ is exercising, and His servants are proclaiming, and by no means that which expresses the wrath of the Lamb.

Whilst alluding to this book, it will be useful to examine more particularly, who the saints are which are on earth during the course of its judgments, and what are their distinguishing features.

It should be remarked, that throughout the whole of the more prophetic part of the book, from chap. vi. to xviii. inclusive, the Church is never named, nor are the saints on earth ever addressed or alluded to under that designation. On the contrary, those distinctions of Jew and Gentile which are obliterated on our becoming members of the Church, the body of Christ, come again into view.

Those who are sealed in chap. vii. are of the tribes of *Israel*. There are saints represented in chap. xi., as wor-

shipping in *the Temple* and at *the Altar*, which are measured to shew that they are, to a certain extent, set apart for God, and He again accepts worship in connection with them, which certainly must be Jewish. The court without the temple is given into the hands of the *Gentiles*, who tread under foot Jerusalem, now again regarded as "the Holy City," whilst the woman^d (the Jewish nation), and her seed are the special subjects of of prophetic interest and testimony (chap. xii.); all this confirming the idea that the Church is gone, and shewing us that the current of the election and dealings of God, has set in towards His ancient people, who, since God has begun to take them up again, become, in consequence, the objects of Satan's enmity and attack. But the moral characteristics of these persons, yet more clearly define who they are. In chap. vi., they cry for judgment, and that God "*avenge their blood*" on their persecutors; as it is the utterance which the Holy Ghost puts in their lips, these feelings, and their expression, must be according to the mind of God, or the Spirit of God would never thus indite and record them. It is now the day of grace, "the accepted time, the day of salvation." And in consequence, this prayer would be unfit for us, and as contrary to the will of God now, as it will be suitable then, when "the door is shut" and the time of long-suffering, grace, and patience, passed away. Similar features are expressed in the parable of the unjust judge, where the saints of that period are presented under the figure of a widow, who cries, "Avenge me of mine adversary"; and upon this, the Lord thus comments. "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them"? The language here used cannot be Christian, as it would be totally unsuitable in the lips of those who are taught to love their enemies, and to pray for those

^d It is obviously inconsistent to regard the woman as the Church, for she brings forth the man child (Christ) who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and is caught up to the throne of God; whilst of Israel it is distinctly said, "*of whom* as concerning the flesh Christ came." Her symbols are those of earthly authority and dominion (Gen. xxxvii.9),

who despitely use them, and persecute them. The Church has no need to cry for her enemies to be destroyed, in order to enjoy her blessings, for she is to be taken up to heaven out of the reach of all; but those who are to have their portion on the earth, must look for the overthrow of their adversaries, both for their own deliverance, and also in order that the kingdom they wait for may be established.

Again, chap. xi., the testimony of the two witnesses is accompanied by judgments resembling those of Moses and Elijah;^e fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their adversaries.^f They shut heaven, and smite with plagues; whereas the very suggestion of calling fire from heaven upon those who refused to receive Jesus when on earth, drew upon the disciples the rebuke, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is *not* come to *destroy* men’s lives, but to *save* them” (Luke ix.).

The remarkable change which we have noticed, in the spirit and feelings of the saints who are spoken of in this book, and which evidently has the divine sanction and approval, is accounted for, as we have seen, by the alteration which has taken place in the divine dealings. This change appears to be contemporaneous with the removal of the Church, which, as the witness of the grace and long-suffering of God, has been gathered for heaven, and taken there as the four-and-twenty enthroned elders witness to us. Then it is, that God prepares to dispossess those who have so long usurped the government of the earth. The Lamb takes the book, after His title to the inheritance has been declared, and opens the seals. The saints of this period declare God’s right to the earth, which man disowns, the coming judgment (chap. xiv. 6, 7), and the day of divine ven-

^e This is not intended at all to countenance the mistaken and unscriptural notion, that Moses and Elijah are the persons here intended, they are evidently, as we learn from the account of the transfiguration, in a glorified state, and not now capable of bearing testimony on earth, suffering and dying as is here related.

^f Compare also the effects produced by the prayers of the saints in ch. viii. 4—7.

geance on the ungodly, for which their prayers ascend, reminding us strongly of similar features in the Psalms, where the same rights and kingdom are constantly the subject.

That there are saints who are removed at a different time, and in a way altogether unlike that of the Church, is evident from the description given in chap. xi. of the translation of the two witnesses, more especially if, as seems most probable, we regard them as symbolising a double character of testimony, borne by two companies of witnesses. There is no descent of the Lord from heaven into the air for them — no meeting other saints in the clouds, and afterwards joining the Lord above them, and the whole accomplished in the twinkling of an eye. But when brought to life, they stand on the earth, and are beheld by their enemies. After this, a voice says, “Come up hither;” and they ascend direct to heaven in a cloud. In this ascent, they are unaccompanied by the dead and living saints, though they go *into heaven* as they have done. A further proof that the idea of Christ’s coming from heaven, and the saints meeting Him after He has arrived in the air, and not ascending into heaven at all, but coming at once with Him to the earth is entirely unfounded. These witnesses have been slain, as well as those who were seen as souls under the altar for their active testimony for the truth. Another company, slain for refusing to worship the beast and his image, when all the world adore it, are seen in heaven, in chap. xv., on the sea of glass, which was not before occupied, having been left vacant for them. These parties, having been put to death, cannot have an earthly place or portion, we find them, therefore, in Rev. xx. sharing in the blessings of the first resurrection, contrasted as it is there with the second, which is a resurrection of judgment (John v. 29), whilst the former includes all who are raised previous to the manifestation of Christ in glory.

Some difficulty may, perhaps, be experienced at first, at the apparently undefined position occupied by those who render testimony to the truth after the Church is in heaven, and how it is that the disciples, during our

Lord's sojourn on earth, are looked at as their representatives. But just as many of the Old Testament declarations, respecting what is to take place during the millennium, not easily understood at first, afterwards became simple enough, so it will be found here, and for very much the same reason. The real solution of the difficulty in both cases being in the change of the dispensation, and in the fact that we find it not easy to place ourselves in circumstances, and under the direction of principles differing so widely from our own.

The present period is altogether peculiar and exceptional; and the action of God, while it lasts, in giving up the earth and in calling out a people for heaven, differs entirely from all that precedes or follows it. After the translation of the Church, there will be a time of transition, just as there was when our blessed Lord was on earth, and with many corresponding features. The Gospel of the Kingdom was preached, and it will be again (Matt. xxiv. 14; Rev. xiv. 6, 7); one who fills a place answering to that of John the Baptist, as the forerunner of Christ, and announcing His coming, will appear (Matt. xi. 14, xvii. 11; Mal. iv. 5, 6); the Jews will be again in their own land, and for a time under Gentile dominion, and again persecuting the disciples of Christ; whilst God is about to send His Son again into this world.

During the former period, the Lord sent His disciples on a special mission to the Jewish nation, with these directions (Matt. x. 5), "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And, as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." After some further intimations of what they must expect to meet with, He adds, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come." The persons to whom the testimony was confined, the subject of that testimony, as well as the circumstances of it and the directions by which it was to be regulated, all differ entirely from that which God has sent to man since the

death and resurrection of Christ. The Gospel is now published far and wide to the *Gentiles*; it is far from being merely a proclamation of the near approach of the Kingdom on earth; Evangelists are not now commanded to go utterly unprovided (Luke xxii. 35—37), and certainly it cannot be said, that the calling of the Church is at any time to be going over the cities of Israel, as the disciples, or those who take up this testimony again, will be doing when the Son of Man comes. The continuance of it at the end is especially remarkable; “when the Son of Man comes,” those who resume it are engaged in going over “the cities of Israel”; and they are thus addressed, “*Ye shall not have gone over,*” etc.; so that we have the authority of the Lord Himself for identifying the testimony of His disciples to the Jews whilst He was on earth with that which will be rendered by the Jewish remnant immediately previous to His return, and for identifying the disciples themselves with that remnant. Let us examine other passages which refer to this period, in order to ascertain to whom they more properly relate. Matt. xxiv. contemplates a destruction of Jerusalem yet future: this is evident from v. 29, 30, where the coming of Christ is declared to follow close upon the tribulation (comp. Dan. xii. 12), as we also learn to be the case from Zech. xiv. 1—5, where the appearing of the Lord, with His glorified saints, for the deliverance of the city, takes place immediately after its capture. There are certain saints at this time in special connection with Jerusalem and Judea, with Jewish ideas and in Jewish circumstances; they are warned—that many will come in the name of Christ, each one professing to be Christ, or the Messiah of the Jews, and that they are not to be deceived by them; that false *prophets* will arise and deceive many; that they are to flee when they see the abomination of desolation set up in the *holy place*; they are told to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath-day; that unless the days of suffering were shortened, no flesh would be saved; that they are not to listen to those who tell them that Christ is here or there—if they say He is in the desert, they are not to go there; or if in the secret chamber, they are not to be-

lieve it. How inconsistent to suppose that such directions could be given or apply to any but Jewish saints. Is the Church likely to be in Judea, so as to have to flee? Can it have begun to regard the temple at Jerusalem as the *holy place* (Heb. ix. 24), and the Jewish Sabbath, or Saturday, as a day that ought to be kept holy? Is it likely to be deceived by impostors who attempt to pass themselves off for Christ, or by others who say that He is to be found concealed in this or that locality, and that it is needful to go there to Him? All this is natural enough, if we view the persons here represented as Jewish believers; the dangers described, and the warnings given, are just suitable to them; they would naturally, as Jews, look for the Messiah in this earthly way, and, therefore, need these instructions to prevent their being deceived; the temple to them will be the holy place, the Jewish Sabbath that which they will observe; having earthly hopes, viz., those of sharing in the blessings of the new earth when Christ comes to reign, it is needful, for that purpose, that their flesh should be saved, or, in other words, that they should live through all these troubles. But does the Church look for this, or is it any consequence to her whether her flesh is preserved, seeing she must be raised and changed to share the glory of Christ? Does she look for Him in a secret chamber; or would she be in any danger of being deluded by such a pretence, when she expects, the moment He comes out of heaven, to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and to be for ever with Him?^s

In Dan. xii., where *Daniel's people* are said to be delivered, it is added, "Every one that shall be found written in the book," which answers exactly to the term "elect" used here. Moreover, in Luke xvii. 31, where the same time is in view, and the same circumstances, and where similar directions are given, it is added, "In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his

^s It is also *after* He has appeared, that the Jews, who are scattered among distant nations, are assembled together by the instrumentality of angels, with a great sound of a trumpet (v. 31), which is evidently a collection of them, and not a translation.

stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back." Now, is it not perfectly inconceivable, that such language could be addressed to a heavenly saint, who beholds God's Son descending for him, and also finds himself at the same instant changed into His image, and ascending in the clouds to meet Him. He is not to turn back to take his stuff out of his house! of what value could it possibly be to him, or how could a changed and glorified saint be supposed to do such a thing? Now, to one who is to remain on earth, and be blessed there when Christ governs it, such a warning would be quite appropriate; it is well that he should go forth to meet Christ and not regard his earthly possessions, however useful they may be to him subsequently. Christ will take care of all that concerns him, and he ought, though a saint destined only for earthly blessings, to be thinking then of Christ alone.

It is not at all surprising, that the apostles should be addressed as the representatives of these persons. We know that, according to the divine purpose, they were afterwards to form the nucleus of the Church; and sometimes they are viewed anticipatively, and spoken of by our Lord according to what they would be when the promised Comforter had come. But they were certainly in their proper character—Jewish believers, rather than what we call *Christians*, a name which was not given till much later, nor was the Church at that time built or formed (Matt. xvi. 18; Acts ii. 47). They could not understand the necessity which there was that Christ should suffer, nor after His death and burial that He would rise again from the dead, though He had expressly foretold both. They trusted that Jesus would have redeemed Israel (Luke xxiv. 21). Even after His resurrection they ask Him, as we have already seen (Acts i.), "Wilt thou at this time restore again the *Kingdom to Israel*?" Their thoughts and hopes, we see by this, were even then connected with, and did not rise beyond, the conditions and prospects of their nation. They clearly did not enter into the counsels of God respecting the Church and their position in it, to which

their minds were only opened after the descent of the Holy Ghost, who came to form it, or they could not have made such an inquiry. They were, up to this time, Jewish believers, who owned Jesus as the true Messiah, and trusted in Him as such, yet retaining their thoughts and feelings as Jews, and looking upon Him in His connection with the Jewish nation and themselves as a part of it, and believing the promises of God towards it, which they expected He would now fulfil. This makes them very fit representatives of those who will be in much the same circumstances at a day yet to come, and who will have much the same feelings and hopes, and much the same amount of light and confidence in Christ as *the Hope of Israel*; and in this way the Lord addresses them, as we have seen in passages such as Matt. x. and xxiv., Mark xiii., and Luke xvii. and xxi.

Many of the passages which relate to the return of the Lord to judge this earth, have a character so peculiarly their own, and differ so widely from those that refer to His coming for the Church, that it seems unaccountable *how* they ever could have been applied to it. For instance, in Rev. i. 7, His advent is thus announced: "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." Again, "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30). And, "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. xxiv. 27). Here His coming is with clouds; it is like the lightning flash which spreads from one end of heaven to the other: every eye beholds Him, and terror and dismay follow. When He comes for His saints, as related in 1 Thess. iv., He does not come with clouds, which are symbolical of providential power and judicial authority. He is not seen by every eye; nor do we read of any such effects being produced. There is no symptom of anything judicial, He comes purely on a mission of love to accomplish which He descends from heaven, to take to Himself the Bride He has purchased with His own blood, and which He has

chosen to be His heavenly companion for ever. His concern is with the Church—with His saints, and with them only—to seek and take them to Himself for ever; for such is the desire of His heart.

He comes as a Redeemer—a Saviour—a Bridegroom; and every idea is excluded but the fulfilment of the purposes and promises of love. To present, in fine, the Church to Himself—“a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

How unlike this is to the way in which, as we have seen, His return to the earth is portrayed. It is compared again to the flood, which swept away the ungodly inhabitants of the world—“As the days of Noe were, so shall also *the coming* of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. xxiv. 37—39);—to the fire which God rained from heaven to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah: “Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (Luke xvii. 28—31). Are the deluge and the fire which God sent from heaven fit emblems of the coming of Christ, when He gathers the Church? Has it that character at all, or are such features exhibited in it as are presented to us in 1 Thess. iv. and similar passages? Observe, it is “*the coming*” of Christ that is compared to these things, and has these marks: “He comes” with the clouds of heaven; “His coming” is like the lightning, the deluge, and the fire rained from heaven. Will He come for His saints as a flood, or as fire, or as lightning?—for His Bride as a judge, or with a two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth, and a rod of iron in His hand, or clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, as He is represented in Rev. xix., and that, moreover, at the

very moment when He comes out of heaven, so that it could not be said, that He changed His aspect after He left heaven, quitting it in one character and assuming another before He reached the earth!

How much the confounding of these two events together must interfere with that joyful and bright expectation, produced by the assurance that the Lord may come *for His saints* at any moment, and which a verse such as this awakens “unto them *that look for Him*, He shall appear the second time without sin unto *salvation*;” for it is evident, that the effect on the heart will vary according to the way in which the Lord’s return is viewed by the believer. As the once commonly received idea of a general judgment and universal conflagration, connected with the Lord’s second advent, operated to hinder its being looked for as an object of desire, and made it almost one of dread, even to His people, in the same way, confusing it with His coming to execute judgment on earth invests it with a character which must necessarily weaken, if not destroy, the sweetness and attractive power of the anticipation and the desire, with which the Bride of Christ should await the coming of her Bridegroom to take her to Himself.

That the statement already above made, that when Christ comes to remove the Church, He is not seen by every eye, is correct, is evident from Col. iii. 4, where we are told that “when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also *appear with Him* in glory.” So that when He is seen by the world, the Scripture positively declares that we shall be with Him, and be seen with Him in His glory. We must, therefore, have been previously removed in order to be with Him, so that when He comes with clouds, and every eye sees Him, that cannot be His coming for us, or He would appear *without* us, instead of our being *with* Him in glory *when* He appears; nor can it apply to His coming as the lightning, a figure which is used expressly to show what will be public and apparent to all, in contrast to what is hidden or secret. This also is confirmed by what is stated by the apostle Jude, who says, “Behold the Lord cometh *with* ten thousand of His saints, to

execute judgment upon all" (Jude, 14, 15; Zech. xiv. 5). In 2 Thess. ii. the apostle Paul himself draws clearly enough the distinction between the rapture of the Church and the day of the Lord—"I beseech you, brethren, by [ὑπὲρ] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand," or, rather, "is present," for such is the undoubted meaning of the word ἐνέστηκεν. The Thessalonian saints mistook, it appears, the terrible troubles through which they were passing for the judgments which will accompany the day of the Lord, which, in consequence, they thought had commenced. This idea disquieted their minds and weakened their confidence, and gave occasion to the appeal of the apostle to them by, or for the sake of,^h the coming of Christ and their gathering to Him, which must first take place, not to suppose that the day had set in. Thus distinguishing these two events, and entreating them, by virtue of one which had relation to themselves, and involved their previous removal, not to be troubled about the other.

Another point of great interest, which is touched on in this epistle, is the power which restrains the progress and development of evil, and the manifestation of Antichrist. "And now ye know," says the apostle, "what withholdeth, that he [Antichrist] might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the midst" [ἐκ μέσου]. The apostle does not tell us what this power was, that held the evil in check; we can only, therefore, gather it from the terms used, from analogy, or from other Scripture.

The Church was first formed when the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost for that purpose. Previous to the death of Christ, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile subsisted; and there could be no such thing, consequently, as their union in one

^h Such is the way the translators took it, and such is the force assigned ὑπὲρ by Matthiæ and other grammarians, *when used with words of entreaty.*

body; nor could that body have any existence until its head was in heaven and glorified, and the Holy Ghost was sent down here to dwell in it, and give it its unity. For these two things are evidently necessary, in order that any natural body should have life: first, it must have a head; secondly, there must be a spirit in it, to animate it and give it the unity of life. Now, during the lifetime of Christ, this unity had not commenced, for it was something far more than a unity of faith in His person. He says of Himself, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth *alone*; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24), so that it is in His resurrection, and by virtue of it, that we have this life in Him, and it could not be before His resurrection (compare also Eph. ii. 5, 6). Not only, therefore, was it needful that Jesus should become man, but He must die and rise again, before a single believer could be united to Him in the same life that He has (John xiv. 19), atonement for sin being the basis of everything. It is not, however, life only, but the presence of the Holy Ghost down here that forms the body, who, now that there is a glorified and accepted Man as its Head in heaven, has come to unite us to Him as such, and incorporate all the living saints into one body, by His presence here on earth; "for," says the apostle, "by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13).

This personal presence of the Holy Ghost on earth is the great characteristic of the present period, and of the existence of the Church whilst here. When leaving His disciples, Jesus promised to them another Comforter, who should "abide with them for ever, even the Spirit of Truth." This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and then the Church was established on earth, so that it could be said, "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved," and the accomplishment of the previous declaration of Christ, "On this rock [His own person] I *will* build my Church," commenced. Ever since this time, the Holy Ghost has remained on earth in the Church. All operations in it are carried on by His agency (1 Cor. xii. 11, Acts xiii. 2, etc. etc.). He builds the Church together as God's habitation (Eph. ii. 22). This

presence of God the Holy Ghost in the body of Christ, and His activity displayed in grace, and power, and blessing, are quite distinct from His providential government in the world, which has subsisted from the beginning, and will subsist after this has ceased, as well as the operations of His grace upon the hearts of *individuals*, which have been carried on in all dispensations. In certain parts of the book of the Revelation, viz., those which precede and follow the visions, we have further evidence of this truth. In the addresses to the Churches, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what *the Spirit* saith to the Churches," is often repeated; and in chap. xxii. the Spirit down here with the Church is represented as looking up to Christ and inviting His return. "*The Spirit* and the Bride say, Come." In these passages, which apply to the present time, the Church is still on earth; and herein we shall perceive the force of the apostle's assertion, that "He who now letteth will let until He be taken out of the way."

Whilst the Holy Ghost is on earth in the Church, His presence is a restraint upon the full manifestation of evil. If the presence of a man of God will act in this way upon a company of ungodly persons, as we have often seen, we cannot be surprised that the presence of the Spirit of God, as well as the light which He diffuses whilst on earth, should operate in this way. When once the Church is removed, and the Holy Ghost is no longer here, the restraining influence ceases to exist, the evil displays itself without hindrance, and Antichrist appears. Hence the propriety of the expression, "He who now letteth will let until He be *taken out of the way*," which appropriately describes His sudden removal with the Church. This coincides with what we have already remarked, that it would be inconsistent to suppose that the Holy Ghost could be here when the Son of man comes to take vengeance, and scarcely finds faith on earth. The ancient idea of the Roman Empire being that which stood in the way of the manifestation of Antichrist, would not *now* meet the requirements of the passage, as that empire has long ceased to exist, and a personal Antichrist has not yet appeared; nor can, it is believed, any other consistent

interpretation of it be offered by those who object to that which is given above.

There are, without doubt, many passages which speak of the day of the Lord, in relation to the conduct and service of the saints. For whilst the rapture has reference to their privileges alone, the day of the Lord is the grand terminus of their responsibilities. The reason of it is found in this, that the servants are called to account and rewarded, after their Master has first received His own kingdom; and has, therefore, been invested with the authority by which He punishes or distributes rewards as He sees fit. The Evangelist Luke tells us (chap. xix. 15), that "when He was returned, *having received the kingdom*, He commanded His servants to be called to Him," and took account of them. The Apostle Paul speaks of a "crown of righteousness" being laid up for him, "which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give him at *that day*, and not to him only, but to all them that love His appearing." It is as the Lord, the righteous Judge, that He bestows this crown, because, as such, He will make the difference between those who have loved and served Him, and those who have not done so. Hence it is not bestowed until that day when He comes and acts publicly in the world in that character. Timothy is told to keep the charge committed to him until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Timothy slept, ages ago, with the departed saints; yet he will not render his account, and receive his reward until that time.

It remains to notice some passages which have occasioned difficulties in some minds. In Matt. xiii., after the account given of the progress of Christianity in the world, and its corruption by the enemy, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, the harvest is spoken of which is to make the separation between them. This, however, as is the case in natural things, is a period more or less prolonged, as we learn from the words, "In time of harvest," "the harvest is the end of the age;" and various and successive actions are spoken of as taking place in the course of its duration. Just as is ordinarily the case in the scene from which this illustration is taken; the field is reaped, so that the crop is ready on

the field before it is carried. The tares are first gathered and bound in bundles — the wheat is transferred to the garner, afterwards the tares are burned in the fire, and still later, it is said, “the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” These two last particulars, being given in the explanation (ver. 40—43) of the parable, which enlarges, and goes beyond its previous statements, and which clearly makes a distinction between the removal of the Church, and its public exhibition in the glory of Christ.

The term used in this parable, as descriptive of the close, “the time of harvest,” may help to remove the difficulty felt by some at the idea of the translation of different bodies of saints at different periods, as the expression seems to intimate that the whole epoch bears the character of an ingathering of saints. But what has chiefly given rise to this difficulty is a mistaken view of Rev. xx.—it having been erroneously supposed, that this passage describes the resurrection of the Church; whilst, in reality, it assumes that it has taken place, but gives no account of it. The passage runs thus, “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast; neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (ver. 4). The apostle had previously seen the Church in glory, both as the enthroned elders in chap. iv., etc., and as the Bride in chap. xix.; and he had also seen it come forth from heaven with Christ just before, when He descended in triumph, as the rider on the white horse, to overthrow the antichristian hosts. He now sees thrones which are occupied by the saints (they sat upon them), and judgment is given to them; but he adds that those who had been martyred, and whom he had before seen as *souls*, *lived* and reigned with Christ also. It was unnecessary to speak of the resurrection of the Church, the members of which were long since risen and ascended; and who had been described as enthroned, and often mentioned as in a glorified state, and who had just accompanied Christ from heaven, in

order to reign, he, therefore, only says he “saw thrones, and *they* sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them,” the antecedent to the pronoun “they” being, the saints who descended with Christ, in chap. xix. 14. The martyrs, also, he now tells us, were raised, in order to participate in the blessing of the reign of Christ, they could not share in it as souls; and, therefore, he adds, of them, and of them only, that “they lived,” in order to reign “with Christ.” “But,” he continues, “*the rest* of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished. *This is the first resurrection.*” So that the term, the *first resurrection*, is applied to all who were raised before the commencement of the Millennium, in contrast with those who were not raised till the end of it. The apostle includes these different bodies in it, whom he now beholds reigning with Christ, and calls it all “the first resurrection.” Cavillers may call it two or more resurrections, and the objection may sound somewhat plausible at first; but this will cease to be the case, when it is discovered that the Holy Ghost uses the term “first resurrection,” in contrast with that which takes place after the thousand years, and which has a totally different moral character. It is evident, that Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, who were translated long ago, will all be included in what is here called the first resurrection, as well as those saints, who, as Matthew relates (chap. xxvii. 52, 53) arose at the resurrection of our Lord; the two witnesses, whose ascension has been described in chap. xi., must also be partakers in it, so that the attempt to attach the whole of it to one moment of time entirely fails. The different parties named in Rev. xx. 4, though sharing in the first resurrection and its glories, do not form a part of the Church, the Bride of Christ, or their resurrection would not be given here *after* the marriage has taken place. Besides which, we cannot suppose that when Christ returns to present the Church to Himself, she is incomplete. The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come,” in reply to the Lord, who presents Himself as “the root and offspring of David — the morning star” in Rev. xxii. 16; and we cannot think that as she is thus represented as a Bride, inviting her Bridegroom to come for her He only finds part of this Bride when He comes,

nor are those saints treated of in the Revelation ever described as sharing in that relationship.

An objection frequently urged, and similar in its nature to that stated above, is, that the views here advocated, make more than one "coming." This argument, when examined, will be found to be of no real force, and very superficial. There would be more truth in saying that the Lord's coming appears to be divided into two parts, which is quite another thing, and quite according to the analogy of Scripture. He comes to remove His saints, as we have seen, and for this purpose He descends, first, to the confines of this earth's atmosphere (1 Thes. iv.), and no further, thus the darkness and slumber of the world are left undisturbed; so far as *it* is in question. He does not then come at all; for the remaining stage of the journey, in which alone it is concerned, is unfulfilled until afterwards, when He returns, accompanied by His saints, to this earth. The first act of His *παρουσία*, "coming" or "presence" is, when He descends for His saints, and so comes to them; the second, when He comes to the world, which He has not done before. It is the latter which is called His *επιφάνεια* "Epiphany" or "Manifestation," and which is never applied to the rapture, but always to Christ's appearing in glory with His saints, whilst *παρουσία* is sometimes used in speaking of one, sometimes of the other, as the context or the persons addressed, or the way in which it is brought forward determines, for He may come or be present in different ways to different persons. The same difference may be observed between the birth of Christ, and that which is ordinarily called His Epiphany at His first coming, though this is only adduced as an illustration, and nothing more. The objection, however, which is merely verbal, is not founded on any specific statement, or application of the expression, in the word of God, which uses the term *second*, in contrast with His *first* coming; and we all know that His "first coming" embraces a wide range of varied circumstances and appearances, which, both in Scripture and in common parlance, it is used to include. We have seen how plainly the saints are declared to come forth with Christ out of heaven, for the destruction of

anti-Christ and his hosts, Rev. xix., against which, and other distinct passages, which have been cited, a merely human notion about the use of the term "second advent," cannot be maintained.

Some have concluded, from what is said in Rev. xi. 15—18, that the public assumption by Christ of His Kingdom, actually takes place then. This would not be of any great moment to the point we are considering, even if correct; but, upon a closer examination, it will be found otherwise, and that it is an anticipative expression uttered by the saints, who are in heaven, on the seventh angel's sounding. This will be made clear, by reference to the following chapter, where almost the very same words are used, when Satan is represented as cast out of heaven, ver. 10: "And I heard a loud voice, saying, in heaven, *Now is come* salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Though there is a distinct intimation in ver. 14, that there are yet three years and a half to expire before Christ actually takes the kingdom. The statement also, in the passage in question, that the time of the dead was come, that they should be judged, makes this more evident, since we know from other Scriptures, that they are not judged till the end of the thousand years. To this we may add, that the last woe has yet to endure, that the temple is opened in heaven, and the third, or final series of judgments, the seven last vials, has yet to be inflicted; to these, the seventh trumpet is introductory, just as the seventh seal was to the trumpets. Chaps. xii.—xiv. being parenthetical. The fact is, that the saints in heaven, who are represented as intelligent in the divine dealings, and able to interpret their meaning, anticipate, both from the sounding of the last trumpet and the overthrow of Satan, the full result upon earth, which will ultimately ensue from what is then taking place in heaven.

In the course of the preceding remarks, many points have been touched upon, which it is not possible to treat fully, within so small a compass, and, to do which, would lead too far away from the subject we have more

immediately before us. The object has been, to give a general outline of the testimony of Scripture upon it, and to bring out the principles which are involved in it, rather than to enter into all the details of the fulfilment of prophecy. Hence, many facts predicted have been merely glanced at in their bearing upon the main question, and many Scriptures which throw light upon it, more or less directly, especially in the Old Testament, have been left out.

That these views are comparatively, at least in our day, recent, need not weigh with any one in examining them; for the same may be said of all that has been written upon these subjects. It is not long since all the prophecies in the Old Testament relating to God's earthly people, the Jews, were universally applied to the Church, as descriptive of her future glory, as they are, even to this day, by a large proportion of Christians. Besides this, we know how great is the variety of opinion that exists in matters of prophetic detail, so that, among such uncertain and rival claims, we may feel quite free in following out any prophetic enquiry, which gives a more clear and distinct future, and more in harmony with the word of God generally, than we have known before; relying, as alone of real consequence, on the sanction which that word gives, under the teaching of the Spirit of God.

It will be seen, that it is not for the want of plain, unmistakable evidence in the Scriptures of truth, that the minds of Christians remain in doubt upon these points; but, alas! there are so many prejudices and preconceived notions, which have to be got rid of; besides which, the heart is slow, as with the disciples of old, to appreciate the height of the love of Christ, and all that He intends to do on behalf of His Bride, the object of His heart's affection. Added to this, Satan has been endeavouring to throw dust in the eyes of those who were enquiring, by bringing forward, by means of opposers, passages which, from want of full acquaintance with their real meaning, have created some misapprehension, and been a hindrance to full establishment in the truth.

He knows, full well, that to lower and destroy the

heavenly hopes which God has given, will dim the perception of the love of Christ; which acts so powerfully on the heart, when rightly understood, in separating the affections from everything else, and fixing them on Him alone. We have need, therefore, to have the heart set right, as well as to have the mind enlightened, in order to enter into these things, so that our desire should be for Christ alone. For the apostle says, "He that is spiritual, judgeth all things," and he lets us know how great a hindrance the carnality of the Corinthians had been to them, and to his instructing them in these things (1 Cor. ii. 6, and iii. 1). May God give to us all, by the power of His spirit, to know and to enjoy the full blessing of His counsels and ways toward the Church, and "to Him be glory, by Jesus Christ, in the Church, *throughout all ages, world without end!*"

(Continued from page 150.)

I have no cares, O blessèd Lord !
 For all my cares are Thine ;
 I live in triumph, too, for Thou
 Hast made Thy triumphs mine.

And when it seems no chance nor change
 From grief can set me free,
 Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
 And, patient, waits on Thee.

Man's weakness, waiting upon God,
 Its end can never miss,
 For men on earth no work can do,
 More angel-like than this.

Lead on, lead on, triumphantly,
 O blessèd Lord ! lead on,
 Faith's pilgrim sons behind Thee seek
 The road that Thou hast gone.

He always wins who sides with God,
 To him no chance is lost ;
 God's will is sweetest to him, when
 It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that God blesses is our good,
 And unblest good is ill ;
 And all is right that seems most wrong,
 If it be His sweet will !

[*The above is slightly altered from an old hymn.*]

N^o. XII.

LIFE.

LIFE is a sacred thing. God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. Life belongs to God. Man lost it at the beginning, through disobedience, and it then returned to God. Adam, as soon as he lost it, was taught to know that he could never, of himself, regain it. Cherubim with flaming sword were set at the gate of the garden, to keep every way the way of the Tree of Life. He received life through the word of truth, the Gospel of a bruised and yet victorious Jesus, a dead and risen Saviour; but in himself he had it not, and of himself he never could regain it, and as surely never transmit it to us. It returned to God—and we who have it, have it by gift from Him through the Lamb who has put away sin, and whose is the Book of Life.

The same mystery of forfeited and irrecoverable life, is afterwards told to Noah, but by another ordinance than that of the cherubim guarding the way of the Tree of Life.

Flesh was given to Noah to eat; but the blood was not given him with the flesh. The blood was the life; and by this prohibition, man was still taught to know that he had forfeited life, and could not recover it (Gen. ix.). And this same ordinance, that blood was not to be eaten, was continued under the Law, and to the same intent (Lev. xvii.).

We, therefore, as either in Adam or of Adam, ought to be full of thoughts of *death* in ourselves. But the Lord Jesus Christ is to be full of thoughts of *life* in Himself. He must be so. And the Gospel by John gives blessed proof that He was so.

In chap. i., the Spirit in the Evangelist recognises this; for, speaking of Jesus, He says, "In Him was life."

In chap. ii., the Lord Himself recognises this, saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"; and He spake of the temple of His body.

In chap. iii., He anticipates His being lifted up on the Cross, for the end of imparting "eternal life."

In chap. iv., He takes knowledge of Himself as the One who carried for sinners the very fountain of eternal, everlasting life.

In chap. v., He speaks of Himself as working in the track of the Father, as the source and communicator of life.

In chap. vi., His thoughts are all about life. It is His subject throughout His discourse to the people.

In chap. vii., He stands, as at the head of the river of life, ready to turn its abundant, overflowing streams through the bellies of all thirsty ones who will come to Him.

In chap. viii., He declares Himself to be the Light of life, and announces the victorious character of that life which He carries and imparts; saying, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

In chaps. ix. and x., which close His public ministry, commenting, as it were, on what it had been, He says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

In chap. xi., a retired scene of service, after His more public work and testimony are over, we find the same mind in Him, expressed, too, under very striking circumstances, and in a very striking and fine manner.

All around are full of thoughts of death. It was at Bethany, and the grave of Lazarus. Disciples, Martha, Mary, the friends of the family, all alike are talking of death. But Jesus has no thought but of life. This is in full, fine character. In order to display the life that He carried, He had remained two days in the place where He was, till the sickness at Bethany had ended in death; then He goes (as God Almighty to Sarah, in Gen. xviii.) as the Quickener of the dead, and both declares Himself and shews Himself "the Resurrection and the Life."

This surely crowns the evidence of what I suggested, that all through this Gospel by John (i.e., in His minis-

try as recorded there), the Lord Jesus was full of thought of the life He carried in Himself for us sinners. And so, in consistency with this, at the end of the Gospel, the Evangelist (speaking again, under the Holy Ghost, as he had at the beginning), speaks of life connected with Jesus. "These things are written," he says, at the end of chap. xx., "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name."

Life is, indeed, the Lord's great subject in this Gospel. And, in further proof of this, we may observe, how in every chapter (which we have already considered), He presses through every hindrance, which the spirit of the world, the ordinance of Israel, the law, flattery or enmity, or anything else which He finds in action and energy around Him, puts in His way, in order that He may bring forth this Life, and dispense it to sinners. Thus:

In chap. ii., the mother, in a worldly spirit, would have Him show Himself; but He refuses.—In chap. iii., Nicodemus would honour Him as a Teacher; but Jesus again refuses.—In chap. iv., He passes through partition-walls which ordinances had set up, that He may carry the waters of life beyond them.—In chap. v., He again breaks down a standing witness, or a pillar, in the city of the Jews, revealing (though the Jews were seeking to kill Him), that the hour had come when the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God and live.—In chap. vi., He presses through the offers of the multitude, refusing the crown at their hands, that He might give Himself to them as the Bread of Life.—In chap. vii., He resents the spirit of the world in His brethren, as in chap. ii., He had resisted it in His mother, but takes His place as the Lord or the Giver of Life.—In chap. viii., He passes by Mount Sinai, refusing to act in judgment, for He was the Light of Life.—In chaps. ix. and x., He takes His place outside the camp, telling us that all His people are to be found *there* also, *there* finding life in its abounding.—In chap. xi., He passes through His personal love to Lazarus, that He may allow death to do its work with him, and then display Himself as Life in victory.

Thus He urges His way through all kinds of hin-

drances, attractions and flatteries, fear and enmities, the spirit of the world, ordinances and partition-walls, all are set aside, that He may be known in the one character, as He who came to do the work of life in a world whose sin was reigning unto death.

God, coming into this world, where death is thus reigning, has come as the Living God, as the One who purposes to overthrow the power of death, and to give life again, life in victorious strength, to those who had been the captives of that power.

Accordingly, the faith that apprehends Him, the faith that reaches Him, the faith that is of the operation of God, knows and receives Jesus the Son of God, in that character, as the Giver of Life.

Peter represents or utters this faith in Matt. xvi. 16, and the Lord at once seals him as taught of the Father. And this is "the Rock." The Rock is God in victorious life, and the Church is built upon Christ as such Rock, as the Lord of Life in victory over all the power of death, and, therefore, the Church is unassailable. The gates of hell cannot prevail. They have been already broken asunder by Him who is the Church's Head and the sinner's Security. Life in Adam was to be tested. It was tested, and yielded to him who had the power of death. But the life that we have from our Rock has been proved to the uttermost, and stood triumphant in resurrection-strength. So that the life we get is eternal infallible life. It is a life which cannot be reached by any assault from the power of death. The murderous stones may disfigure Stephen's present tabernacle, take it down roughly, or tear it in pieces: but his life in Christ is untouched by all that—his spirit takes its journey homeward—there to await a clothing worthy of itself, eternal like itself, the house not made with hands, the building of God.

But, again, I say, we have life constantly kept before us, in this Gospel by St. John. But it is variously, as well as constantly, presented; presented *in different attributes or conditions*. Thus:—

1. It is shewn to us as being *the fruit of sin put away*.

Life.

2. It is shewn to us as *leading into light*.
3. It is shewn to us as *abounding* or *overflowing*.
4. It is shewn to us as in *victory*.
5. It is shewn to us as *being imparted* (in its full or final power) *to the body*.
6. It is shewn as *leading us into relationship*.
7. It is shewn as enabling us, if the Lord please, to *remain here till He returns*.

These are fine attributes or conditions, in which the life, received from Jesus, the Son of God, is presented to us.

1. That life is the fruit of sin put away is a necessary truth; but it is shewn here by this, that He who carries it for us, is "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." (i.)

2. That this life leads into light is declared in the words, "in Him was life, and the life was the light of man"; and it is illustrated in every soul that is quickened in the course of this Gospel; for each of them finds his rest or his home in the divine presence, and that is "the light."

3. That this life is abounding or overflowing, the Lord declares himself, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (x.)

4. That it is life in victory is seen in the empty sepulchre.

5. That it is imparted to the body, we have from the words, "I am the resurrection and the life."

6. That this life takes us into relationship, making us sons of God, or giving us to know God as our Father, is clear from those words, "because I live, ye shall live also — at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." (xiv.)

7. That this life might continue in our present body, till the Lord return, is implied in His words to Peter concerning John, "if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee." (xxi.)

What fine attributes of the life we receive from the Son of God, are these!

It is, surely, a life *imparted*, a gift of sovereign grace,

made communicable to us by the sacrifice of the Cross, which put away sin; but being imparted, it is thus blessedly and preciousy conditioned. But it is a *gift*. The Cherubim, at the gate of Eden, as I have alluded to already, had a flaming sword to keep every way, the way of the Tree of Life. Adam, at that moment, was a pardoned sinner. He had heard and received the word of salvation, and the Lord God had clothed him with a coat of skin, made by Himself. But all this did not give Adam either title to the Tree of Life, or power of himself to reach it. The flaming sword, as thoroughly stopped up Adam's way to the Tree, as it did Cain's. Man, as man, is on one side of the sword, and the Tree of Life on the other. Life is no more within the reach of one man, of himself, than of another. All are alike in that respect — dead in sins, and children of wrath by nature. Therefore, the Lord says to His disciples, in John xiii., "As I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say unto you." That is — though they were disciples, and at that moment, sure of heaven, yet *of themselves* they could no more go where He was then going, than a reprobate unbelieving Jew could.

Now, this word of Christ was like the sword of the Cherubim, keeping an Adam as surely apart from the Tree of Life, as a Cain. Jesus would go and prepare a place for His disciples — as chap. xiv. 3, tells us — but they could no more reach that place, by title or power of their own, than the Jews, who had rejected Him. We are to receive of the Tree of Life (Rev. ii. 7); but we have no power to press our way back to it.

The Lord Jesus, however, was the very opposite of this; His condition was not what ours is, in this great matter. The same passage, in John xiii., tells us this. "Now is the Son of Man glorified," He says there, "and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." He speaks of Himself as One that is to be *straightway* glorified, glorified at once, needing no preparation to be made for Him. With Him, there was both title and power; life and glory, were His, by personal right, and by moral title. He had never

forfeited the Garden of Eden. He walked as one that was actually outside of it, all His days; amid the thorns and briars, the sorrows and privations, of a self-ruined world. But this He did in grace. He took such a condition upon Him, but He was not exposed to it. He was not on one side of the Cherubim, and the Tree of Life, or the Garden of Eden, on the other. In His history, there is no sword in the hand of an angel to keep the way of that Tree, as there is in man's or Adam's history — but, on the contrary, when He had accomplished His temptation, angels came and ministered to Him (Matt. iv. 11). He stood where Adam had failed and fallen — so that angels came with services to serve Him, and not with a flaming sword to withstand Him.

This is precious, as honouring and distinguishing Jesus, the Son of Man. But my present subject is not so much His excellencies, as the life we get from Him. May we prize it more, and learn to love the blessed Giver!

FRAGMENT.

IN Scripture, the terms "LIFE and DEATH" are used in various connections; and so in senses which differ. They are used as to the natural body; they are used, also, as to the moral inward state of man; and they are used as to man in his eternal state. Man, as at first created, was, as a creature, morally alive when placed in Eden. He had natural life in his body; he had not eternal, divine life in body, soul, or spirit.

Disobedience brought in moral death — death in trespasses and sins; it entailed mortality on the trespasser, laid him under the power of death, and pointed onward to the second death.

Faith gives a new, a divine nature, a seed that is incorruptible. To that seed belong affections, thoughts, intentions, desires, which all flow from Christ, and lead back, by the Spirit, to God: and this is shown in us while in the body; while on our way to God; while waiting for Christ, and for the glorious bodies which He will give to us. God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

N^o. XIII.A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE SECOND
EPISTLE BY PETER.

IN this epistle, the apostle, under the Holy Ghost, anticipates the moral corruption which was to overspread Christendom. Language and figures are largely employed to set forth this awful anticipation or prophecy; and surely our observations may well and fully vindicate the Spirit's forebodings. For what we know of such corruptions may lead us to say, that language or figures borrowed from Balaam, or from Sodom, or from the fallen angels, from the dog, or from the sow, are not too awful for the reality.

But *pollution* suggests *judgment*. In a divine sense, in the reckoning of God, in righteousness or holiness, there is a necessary connection between them. Accordingly, this same epistle contemplates judgment as well as moral corruption. This we see in chap. iii., following, as of course it does, chap. ii.

These are the apostle's materials, or principal objects, in these chapters — moral corruption in chap. ii., judgment in chap. iii. Glory, or the dwelling-place of righteousness, is seen only in the distance; and I may, therefore, speak thus: moral pollution occupies the foreground, divine judgments the mean or middle place, and glory shines faintly afar off.

But this being so, the apostle has a practical purpose. It is this, I doubt not — to set the saints to that cultivation of holiness, that living exercise of their souls in the power of godliness, which will keep them apart from this evil condition which he is foreboding. This is seen in chap. i.

He tells them, at the very beginning, that full pro-

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vision was made to this end — full provision for this husbandry, to which he is about to set them.

He tells them, that divine power had given and secured to them all that pertained to, or was needful for, not only life, but *godliness*, and that the promises, exceeding great and precious as they were, had a *purifying* virtue in them; that by them the saints would be made partakers of divine nature, as a people who had escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. All this he tells them at the outset, and this at once bespeaks his practical purpose in writing to them, setting forth their provisions in God, and His power and His promises, not for salvation or joy (though that be true, as we know), but for *godliness*.

The promises are looked at in their *cleansing* virtue. It is, as I may say, the *washing* of water by the word that Peter here contemplates and speaks of, as Paul does in another place (Eph. v. 26).

And having thus declared our provisions in God and His word for the ends of godliness, he puts us upon the husbandry of godliness. He tells us of *fruitfulness* — fruitfulness which will be known in the cultivation and production of those graces and virtues which give real, intrinsic character to the saints, those habits, and tempers, and properties of the soul, the inner man, which we know with God are of great price.

And there is a difference, we may observe, between *service* and *fruitfulness*. Service is something more manifested, fruitfulness may be very hidden. The hand, or the foot, or the tongue may serve; and so they should. Tipped with the blood and the oil, they are to be instruments in the hand of the divine Master of the house, and to be as servants there; but it is in the deeper places of the affections, the secrets of the soul, that the husbandry of the saints, in the power of the Spirit and the truth, is to be yielding fruit to God. Herbs, meet for Him by whom the soul is dressed, are to spring and grow there, fragrant, and beautiful, such as bespeak the virtue of that rain that has visited it from heaven (Heb. vi. 7).

But still further—in proof how Peter is keeping prac-

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tical godliness in view — he not only gives the promises, as we have seen, in connection with that, but other things and objects also. Thus, looking at the distant glory, he sees it under this character, the *dwelling-place of righteousness* (iii. 13). It is not its brightness or its joy he anticipates, but its *purity*. He calls the Mount of Transfiguration the *holy hill* (i. 18). And this being so, the place to which the saints are tending being *holy* — being the dwelling of righteousness, he tells them, that if they be, as he exhorts them, cultivating godliness — if their husbandry be spent on virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, charity, and the like, then they will have an *abundant* entrance into that kingdom. And this is a very simple and sure thought. If the place we are to enter, when the journey is over, be a clean place, a holy hill, a dwelling of righteousness; and if, while we are on the road, we be cherishing the holy, the clean, the righteous mind, surely our entrance will be the more *easy* and *natural*, and thus abundant. This will be so, because we have been already (in the spirit of our minds, or in character) in the place we are approaching. We know it already, in the great moral sense. We may not have had one ray of its brightness or glory along the road that has led us to it, but we have been exercised in its virtue—we have been in moral consistency with it. We have not had its *scenery* yet, but we have already breathed its *atmosphere*; and that ensures an easy, a natural, or an abundant entrance.

And I may add this, that as we see, in chaps. ii. and iii., corruption ending in judgment, so in chap. i. we see the path of the saints — of those who walk in the practical power of their holy calling — ending in a happy, abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom.

Yes; and this moral we may draw from this. How should the path savour of the place it leads to! Are we on our way to One who was rejected here? How fit that we should not refuse to be rejected with Him. Are we on our way to join the Conqueror of the world? How fit that we should cherish that faith that overcometh the world. Are we soon to see Him who loved us so as to die for us? How right that we should cul-

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tivate love one to another. And, according to the suggestions of this epistle, are we tending to the dwelling of righteousness? How does it become us to grow in grace, and to be adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and the like. Thus and thus we may speak to ourselves; but if one may speak for others, we have to say, "My leanness! my leanness!"

"Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.)

"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." (Gal. ii. 20.)

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." (Col. iii. 3—5.)

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 11, 12.)

"ONE spirit with the Lord ;"
O blessèd, wondrous word !
What heavenly light, what power divine,
Doth that sweet word afford !

"One spirit with the Lord ;"
The Father's smile of love
Rests ever on the members here
As on the Head above.

"One spirit with the Lord ;"
Jesus, the glorified,
Esteems the Church for which He bled,
His body and His bride.

And though by storms assail'd,
And though by trials prest,
Himself our Life, He bears us up
Right onward to the rest.

N^o. XIV.

2 CHRONICLES XVIII.

IN the declining days of the house of David, as we see in 2 Chron., the spirit of God occasionally visits. The Lord sends His prophets, "rising up early and sending them;" and those Prophets warned, and threatened, and counselled, "till there was no remedy," and Judah went into captivity.

The like thing, to a certain measure, is seen in the history of the Ten Tribes, or in the kingdom of Israel, as the two Books of Kings shew us. Prophets warned the people again and again, till Israel was carried into Assyria.

But these visits or energies of the Spirit in Israel, distinguished themselves, I judge, from what they were in Judah. They never, I believe it will be found, brought comfort or encouragement. For Israel, at the very outset, revolted from God as well as from David — and what the house of Jeroboam began, every other house that reigned in Israel, whether of Baasha, Omri, or Jehu, continued. And the Spirit seems always to act as a *stranger*, when acting in Israel. Thus, at the very beginning, the man of God, sent against the altar at Bethel, was commanded not to eat or to drink, or to tarry, or even to return by the way that he went. And much in the same way was the young man, who was sent to anoint Jehu, instructed to carry himself. And Elijah and Elisha, raised up by the Spirit in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, appear as strangers there, all through their ministries. Their walk is desultory and informal. They own no house of God in the land — and each of them furnishes the Lord Jesus, in His teaching, in Luke iv., with instances of God going outside the bounds of the elect people. I mean when He alludes, as He does there, to the widow of Sarepta, and to Naaman, the Syrian.

In Judah, on the contrary, the Spirit was *at home*, and had *various* work to do. To the end of the declining days of Judah, the Lord recognises his house among them (see 2 Chron. xxxvi.) And though His voice in His Prophets be generally that of warning and rebuke, yet still, at times, He counsels, and comforts, and encourages.

Thus, Rehoboam is warned not to go against the revolted Tribes, with the hope of bringing them back, because that revolt had been God's judgment on the house of David. This warning was, therefore, gracious counsel.

In the times of Jehoshaphat and Amaziah, the Spirit, in different Prophets, warned the kings of the house of Judah, to keep themselves from all alliance with the house of Israel. This was gracious.

Asa and Hezekiah, and the days of Joash, in the person of Jehoiada, witness how mightily and blessedly the Spirit could help Judah at times.

And there is a peculiar form and acting of the grace of God, by His Spirit, in the days of Josiah. The Book of God is found; and then the Spirit in Huldah, the Prophetess, interprets present things in the light of the Book.

Now, all this various energy of the Spirit of God, in the declining days of the kingdom of Judah, has a voice in our ears, in this our day. But among all these instances of the acting and energy of the Spirit then, our chapter (2 Chron. xviii.) affords us one of the most solemn and affecting.

The whole scene is very weighty and serious. The two spirits are there, the unclean spirit, and the Spirit of God, the spirit *from* the Lord, and the Spirit *of* the Lord.

The world, or the apostate, is there, in the person of Ahab.

The involved, defiled saint is there also, in the person of Jehoshaphat.

The separated man, the witness of Christ, is seen in Micaiah.

And, beside, we get the various fate, so to speak, or

the history of the different actors, in this solemn scene; at the end of it all, the king of Judah, and the king of Israel.

The spirit of delusion, the unclean spirit, is here, doing the work of dementation in the apostate Ahab, ere his destruction comes—for his measure of iniquity was now full. But the Spirit of God is here also, in the Prophet Micaiah, faithful, and, therefore, *grieved* and *suffering*—grieved, doubtless, by the evil, impure connection between the saints and the world, which that moment exhibited Jehoshaphat sitting with Ahab; suffering, even to bonds and imprisonment as from the world, by the hand of Ahab.

Striking, indeed, are the energies which are seen at work here. The spirit of error encourages the king of Israel to go on with all his projects; for he promises him, that there is only victory and prosperity before him. Zedekiah, one of the false prophets, goes so far as to make horns of iron, symbols of the strength with which Ahab was to push his enemies, till he had destroyed them. Zedekiah did not take into account the moral condition of things at that moment with Ahab, and his kingdom. This was nothing to him. It can be nothing to a false Prophet. But Zedekiah says all he can, and does all he can, to urge Ahab on his way, and carry out all the purposes and expectations of his heart, assuring him of all the honor and wealth that would attend him.

And, surely, I may say, we see much of this same thing now a days. The moral state of the world, its character under God's eye, is not appreciated. It encourages itself to go forward. "Progress," is the writing on its standard now. "Excelsior," is its motto; higher and higher still in the attempts and attainments of human skill and capability. A rejected Lord is overlooked or forgotten. The blood of Jesus may have once stained the earth, but the earth is still fruitful. Man has departed from God, but he has skill and resources to build a city and a tower. If ever there was a time when man was encouraged to go on, it is the present. Character or condition before God is not estimated. These

are days, when many a Zedekiah is making horns of iron; many a deceived heart, and practised hand is prophesying and sketching the world's sure progress.

And much of the religion of the day speaks flattering words in the ear of the world, as to all this its purpose and its expectation, not knowing its character before God. But in Micaiah, the true language is heard—vessel of the Spirit of God as he was.

He lets the king of Israel know, that Ramoth-Gilead shall witness his fall, and the scattering of that flock, which he, as a shepherd in Israel, was now gathering there. He speaks not of progress and of triumph, but of judgment.

Surely this is a word for us. Christendom presents all this. This chapter is a fruitful witness of what is now around us in larger characters. A grieved, and, in some places, a suffering, faithful election—saints defiled by evil alliances—the world in its hopes and projects of growing importance—and an unclean false spirit encouraging the world, thoroughly careless or indifferent as to its character before God. Can we not read these things in this chapter, and can we not as clearly read them in the day through which we are passing?

And, let me observe, there is something of all this to be seen in Luke xix.

The multitude are watching the Lord on his way to Jerusalem; and they think that the kingdom of God is *immediately* to appear. They judge that nothing is needed but a little "progress." The Lord was on His way to the royal city; and He had but to reach it, as they seem to have imagined, and the glory would be there, and the day of the power of the kingdom. They did not weigh present things in Israel, in God's balances—they did not appreciate them in their relationship to Him, which is the real character of every thing.

The parable of the nobleman who went into the far country, is there delivered by the Lord, to correct this thought of the multitude—and after a little while, He makes His formal entry into the city, but only to expose such a condition of things there, such a *moral* condition, as would surely hinder God from displaying His glory

there; and Jesus, therefore, instead of letting the kingdom immediately appear, retires in judgment. For the glory must have a clean vessel.

This is full of meaning — and like our chapter, has a voice for this our day. For, if there be a warning needed by the present generation in Christendom, it is this — that things must be estimated in God's light, in the face of the great wide-world fact, that Jesus, God's Christ, has been rejected here. No other estimation is divine. But this generation are not carrying that secret with them — as the multitude, in Luke xix., did not consider the moral condition of Jerusalem then, but looked for an immediate kingdom; and, as the Prophets in Israel made promise to the king in Israel, of progress, and prosperity, and triumph, in spite of all the apostate condition of things then in Israel.

Let the saints of God remember, again, I would say, that the glory must have a clean vessel. The Spirit of burning and of judgment must do its work in the cloud by day, ere the shining of the flaming fire by night, can rest on the dwellings and assemblies of Zion, as says the Prophet (Isaiah iv. 4, 5). The angels of the Son of Man must take out of His kingdom all that offend and do iniquity, ere the righteous can shine forth in the kingdom, as the Lord of the Prophets Himself says (Mat. xiii. 41—43).

And surely do the ministers of judgment find out the subject for judgment. At the end, Jehoshaphat is preserved, and Ahab falls — though all was tending to the contrary. Ahab had sheltered himself; and the word of the king of Syria had marked such a one as Jehoshaphat appeared to be, for the sword. But God was Judge. The issue of the day was in His hand; and the *eagles* that He sends out know whose the *carcass* is (Luke xvii). “Where, Lord?” asked the wondering disciples. “Wheresoever the body is,” said their Master, “thither will the eagles be gathered together.” Again, I say, the ministers of judgment find out the subject for judgment. The Judge of all the earth will do right. The arrow of the Almighty will surely reach its mark, as it does here, and Ahab, the apostate, the representative of the revolted world, falls.

It seems likely, because there is Archippus also, who is exhorted to take heed to his ministry. If it be so, the fact that he speaks thus of Onesimus to the Christians at Colosse, is another proof of his loving care for this new convert. He lays him thus upon the hearts of the assembly, sending his letter by him and Tychicus. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, there are no salutations; but the same Tychicus is its bearer. Timothy is joined with Paul in the address of the Epistle to the Colossians, as well as in this to Philemon. It was not so in the Epistle to the Ephesians; but in that to the Philippians, to whom the apostle hoped to send Timothy ere long, their two names are again united.

I do not draw any conclusions from these last details; but they furnish ground for enquiry into details. Each of the four epistles was written during the apostle's captivity at Rome, and when he was expecting to be delivered from that captivity.

Finally, that which we have especially to remark in the Epistle to Philemon, is the love which, in the intimate centre of this circle (guarded all round by an unparalleled development of doctrine), reigned, and bore fruit, and bound the members of Christ together, and spread the savour of grace over all the relationships in which men could stand towards each other—occupying itself about all the details of life with a perfect propriety, and with the recognition of every right that can exist among men, and of all that the human heart can feel.

FRAGMENT.

WHAT a difference between the expectations of the apostles (as expressed Acts i.), and the intentions of God!

The kingdom restored to Israel, was *their* thought.

The King gone on high, and Israel left on earth to fill up the measure of their iniquity, in persecuting a people dear to and connected with their lately-rejected King (a people to be formed by the testimony about the King gone on high, and the Holy Ghost come down—the promise of the Father), such was God's intention.

N^o. XVII.

HEAVEN.

“THE Heaven, *even* the heavens *are* for Jehovah; but the earth hath he given to the children of men.”

The offer of a few remarks, and those of a simple kind, is all that I can hope to attain to upon this topic. The subject is of interest to all those who are on their way to heaven; and it is of importance, too, to those whose faces are not yet turned thitherward. For darkness is everywhere else, and nowhere else is there to be found light, in which to see light; but in heaven, there is a light; and it is the true and abiding light; which, not only sheds its light over a world in darkness, but, communicates itself to those who, in heart, seek after it. For God and His Christ are now in heaven; and “this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

To any extraordinary knowledge about the place, I make no pretension; indeed, I not only confess myself to be still a learner about it, and to know nothing, save the little which God may have given me, to see for myself that He has revealed about it in the book, but, I have individual confession for culpable past ignorance to make. Still I have read what others have written, as students gleaning for themselves, and for God’s people in the field of His written Word, and, I have, while gleaning there for myself, found some things, which have struck my own mind, and which I would desire now to present to others.

1. CONTRAST OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

A contrast between heaven and earth might be drawn; and that would throw heaven out into bright relief, in contrast with earth and its history.

The history of the earth is the history of sin, and of man's failure upon it; but, amid all the failure here below, When did heaven above prove itself unmindful of the failed ones that looked up to it? Or, baffled as to wisdom, power, or intelligence, of how to show its wealth, and befriend the failed ones that seek to it? This is saying too little; in every way too little. For heaven, not only has made known that there is One in it, able and willing to help the seekers; but that One, has been altogether before the seekers, in proffering aid, and in displaying resources, ready for help in time of need. Yea! and more too. For in the unfolding of the doctrine of salvation, — the doctrine of God, the God of Heaven, being a Saviour-God — the tale does not begin outside of Eden, after the door was closed upon the guilty, rebel man; — but, when the whole tale is told, we find that, somehow or the other, he that brought in ruin upon earth, had showed himself ere ever Eden's garden was planted.

The Book of Genesis, gives us the genesis of *man*, and of the earth; but there was one before them, a liar and a murderer from the beginning, who, if he found in Eden an occasion to do mischief, found, in that very mischief he did, in the midst of that very ruin which he occasioned, that he himself was entangled and trapped; — for the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. This brought out the priority and the pre-eminence of heaven, as to good, in its contrast with earth; and something of a length and depth about *the ways* of heaven, which goes altogether beyond the bounds of earth.

Man would not stand in the light that shined in paradise. Man kept not his first estate there. But, if man was to be driven out, God would first give him a word, spoken to Satan, about the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head, ere he was driven out. Outside of Eden, we see, in Cain and Abel, man under a new phase; and what the goodness of God, in those circumstances, was; and in the fresh blessing of Seth, as a line of hope.

But man declined and failed still more; the judgment

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of the deluge swept away the wicked; and Noah, the man of the new earth, received a covenant of providential mercies.

Man sinks again, until idolatry is spread abroad, and Abram is called out, to walk with God as a stranger and pilgrim. The God of Heaven shows His grace in various ways to Abraham and to Lot, to Isaac and to Jacob; yet, alas! each character among them, is one of less perfect conformity to the mind of heaven, than the preceding one. Joseph is now found in Egypt.* The slavery of Israel follows; for the God of heaven was preparing for Himself *a redemption*, to be accomplished in Israel, even as He had shown a *call and gifts* in the case of Abraham. The senselessness of flesh, appears but too soon; and the law of righteousness is given, to teach Israel what there is, and what there is not in the flesh. This goes on, with various modifications, until there are but a few left, and they poor and feeble. Messiah is born. One appears, whose predicted coming had raised hopes in many hearts. He spreads out all His readiness to take up the whole burden of the nation, in its fallen state, and to bear the whole responsibility Himself. But He is slain with wicked hands. Raised again from the dead, He lingered, forty days, in the haunts of His days of humiliation, and goes up to heaven, thence to send down a message of mercy, and the power of the Holy Ghost, *beginning at Jerusalem.*

Judea, Samaria, the Gentiles hear the word of the grace of the Lord and Messiah. Then Saul of Tarsus is raised up, to witness to the personal association of the heavenly people, with the Son of God, as such, in heaven; not merely as Lord and Christ, but as Son of God.

The Word spreads out. Churches are formed everywhere. Declension sets in. God moves the chosen servants of His Son, to give the analysis of the evil, and heaven's judgments upon it in the epistles. And

* The faith of Joseph might build up the kingdom of Egypt, as it did; but Joseph's faith could never change Egypt's character. A solemn word to those who now give their strength to the house of the stranger.

in the Apocalypse it is shown out afresh, that, fail as the candlesticks may, the Lamb is on the throne, and all sure in Him — for God and His people.

The apostasy of Israel, the declension of the churches, the final apostasy, as to governmental power, may now be maturing; but faith knows that Jesus will yet be King in Zion,—that the Church will be the bride of the Lamb on high,—and that the Gentiles, *extern* and *intern*, shall yet be forced to bow the knee to the Nazarene.

When the Lord rises up from the right hand of God, the heavenly places will be purged; the Church established there — there to reign a thousand years with Christ; but the heaving of the earth, when the heavens are cleansed, will issue in a reign of righteousness, over Jew and Gentile, during a thousand years; and then Satan, let loose once more from the pit, will show what man is; and then shall follow the judgment and the new heavens, and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

It is a contrast, and no mistake; and, however rapidly we may run the eye through the points of the history in which the contrasts stand forth, heaven is found to be always the resource for man, because God is there; and more than that, for the plan and purpose of the God of heaven to give blessing, is evident from first to last. The God of heaven will put down Satan; put him down by means of the seed of that very woman whom he, Satan, first entangled; and *so* put him down, *so* break all his power and rule, as that all the weak ones, once the children of wrath, even as others, who cleave to this seed of the woman, they shall share, either in heaven above or earth beneath, the glory that belongs to Him as the Redeemer.

2. THE UNITY OF HEAVEN'S WAYS, ETC.

Or, again, we may look at heaven in the various displays of it. For there is not only a unity that we trace in "heaven as it was," "heaven as it is," and "heaven as it shall be" — a blessed unity in Him who is God; and

a blessed unity in His counsels; in His plans; in His work; in His objects.—But, also, while the counsel, plan, work, and purpose are but one, there is such a marvellous variety in the ordering of the plan itself, as cannot be passed by unnoticed.

The purpose was, that God should be all in all (1 Cor. xv.) That is, as I understand it, that in heaven above, and on earth beneath, in spite of all that Satan has done and tried to do, the name of God shall be permanently stamped everywhere, on everything, in heaven above, and on earth beneath; while all that will not bow, all that will not bear and wear that glory, shall be circumscribed to the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

It may be, that in heaven above, God shall be all in all, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that in earth, God shall be all in all, as Jehovah-Elohim-Shaddai, Messiah, and the Spirit. But the time shall come, when, neither in heaven above, nor in earth beneath (in the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness), shall there be anything and any one not fully subject to the display of divine glory. Each thing and each person in their respective spheres and characters of glory; but God all in all.

If, leaving aside, for the moment, the peculiar displays which God means to make of His glory in connection with man, we consider broadly what has been shown out among men upon earth, as having been characteristic of what was in heaven, we shall see a gradually increasing light about heaven; and not only so, but certain elements introduced, or to be introduced, which justify our speaking of heaven *as it was*; heaven *as it is*; and heaven *as it will be*.

Creation gave a plain token of God's presence, and of the beneficence of the eternal power and Godhead of the God of heaven. In His visit to man after the fall, He did more; in his clothing and driving man out of Eden; in His acceptance of Abel's lamb and rejection of Cain and his fruits, and in His replacing Cain by Seth; in His dealings with Enoch and with Noah, with Abraham and Lot, according to a call given; in His separation of

Israel as a nation, to be the central nation to Himself upon earth, with the other nations grouped round it; in His redemption of that nation; in the Mediatorship, priesthood, tabernacle, kingly glory, temple, prophetic office; in the power put into the hands of four nations, to oppress the *people* of the Lord in the land which belonged to Him; in the fact of the incarnation and tabernacling in flesh of His Son; and, when Israel and the Gentiles rejected Him, His forming a Church on earth, and revealing a heavenly tabernacle and heavenly hopes;—in all these things we see, as the stream widens, how the subjects connected with the interests of heaven become more plain. And in the Lord descending hereafter to cleanse the heavenly places, and have His bride there, while all the heads and substance and powers which are now at work on earth, are to be put down under the Son of man in His reign, until (after the final apostasy) He abolishes death, and brings in the divine glory—we see the still wider stream in all its perfectness. All this speaks of the God of heaven, and tells of the counsels and plans of heaven.

3. HEAVEN AS IT WAS, IS, WILL BE.

But if we turn to heaven as it *IS*, we find that which sets before us a certain contrast from that which *was*, and from that which *will be*.

In the prayer now answered—“And now, Father, glorify Thou me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was”—we have, clearly enough, Jesus of Nazareth as Son of man in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

The Son of God in the divine glory, creating and upholding and testifying in Scripture, is that which faith recognises to have been true of the Son from Gen. i. 1, down to the day of His incarnation.

But this is very different from this same blessed One being displayed now, as Son of man, upon the throne, in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Now, the work is done; and He Himself is

there, in proof of its being finished, and the power of the Holy Ghost is come down.

And as to what *will be*. He, on whom every title of redemption-glory rests, has yet, hereafter, to rise up from the place where He now sits, in patience, waiting, and to act upon and according to the titles so resting upon Him.

It was, I admit, an amazing step *onward*, when God became manifest in flesh; and when the Son of the Highest was born a babe in Bethlehem. But still the work was not done: the cross was still future; and, until the cross had been endured, the work was not done.

The work ended, and the value of it proved by the resurrection of the Lord, He is now in heaven: His patience still waiting. The work is now known only to faith; because grace will gather a people to Him there in heaven.

And when that gathering and calling to heaven are closed, He will rise up to act in energy and power; to show out the power and the glory.

If I consider the manifestation of the glory of God in connection with these three general testimonies of heaven *as it was*, heaven *as it is*, and heaven *as it will be*, I cannot hesitate for a moment as to which is the brightest and best manifestation of that glory.

True! each was perfect in its time; each display, too, has a bearing upon the others, and a voice from and for the others: but as well might we say, that heaven *as it will be*, when the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb shall dwell in the new Jerusalem, will not be a brighter and fuller display than that which now is—as to say, that heaven *as it is*, has no fuller testimony to faith, as to the glory of God, than had heaven *as it was*.

While man was being tried, and while time was allowed to roll out, in order that it might be seen that, among men, there was no saviour, heaven shut its light in to itself, and spake forth its thoughts by types and shadows upon earth, and in earthly redemptions of an earthly people.

When the Son appeared—who was worth speaking

of, save He? God manifest in flesh; He of whom it could be said, "He that hath seen Him, hath seen the Father"—this was light displayed; the true and real Light. And yet it had not expressed itself, according to the earth, fully, until upon the cross He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But here was an enigma which none but God could solve or explain: it was solved by the resurrection; and is now explained to faith since the ascension, and descent of the Holy Ghost.

And here comes in that other all-important truth; namely, that the light was light fitted for man *as a sinner* upon earth. It was not only perfect light, shining forth from God; but light that now can shine into the heart and mind and conscience of a poor sinful soul. Where was this to be found in Old-Testament times? There was nothing then that could make the conscience perfect.

God in the tabernacle, or God in the temple? Yes; but how far will the tabernacle of the wilderness, or the temple of the land, set a soul at rest? As God of Israel, He may pardon: but eternity? How shall I find rest as to it? The Jewish sacrifices have only efficacy for a year! And the day that discharges all guilt, the great day of atonement, precedes days on which sin may be renewed.

Then, again, shall I give a bullock or a ram for the sin of my soul? Or how can a sinner like myself mediate for me? Thanks be to God! all this is now changed. Upon the throne of the Majesty of the Highest, there is a Man who, with the heart of the Son of man, assures our souls, that that which has justified God in proclaiming His throne to be the throne of mercy, may well justify us in drawing near with boldness. And what solemn truth meets one's soul there? Sin was against the God of heaven, in His eternal majesty; His own Son, as Son of man, has borne the full penalty in His own body on the tree; and, token of the ineffable delight of God in Him and His work, He has received the promise of the Father, and sent down to us the Holy Ghost. Here the soul finds a perfect rest; and though

we have, with patience, to wait until He rises up, yet are our hearts assured before Him in love; and we do with patience wait for Him, who shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation. We take our place as a redeemed people, His own heavenly people; not of the world, as He is not of the world; but who wait for Him to come, and receive us to Himself.

We have thus looked briefly, 1st, at heaven as in contrast with earth, in their several histories; 2ndly, at the unity of the mind, etc., of heaven at all times; and, 3rdly, at the points of contrast internally in heaven *as it was*, heaven *as it is*, and heaven *as it will be*.

The field is thus before us; and it has treasures of untold value in it, some of which we may examine. The fact is, that the person of our Lord being there, every title of honour and blessing and glory rests upon Him; and we can only know *them* as they are found in Him there; and according as His acting upon them to usward, has caused the reality of that which was contained in the titles to become apparent. These heavenly things are thus (as connected with the honour which Heaven has set upon Christ) most precious; and, inasmuch as they are made known by His acting towards us upon them, they become at once the expression of the delight which God and the Father has in Him and in us, towards whom the blessing flows forth: and they lead our souls, withal, into the relationships of Christ in heaven, and into the fellowship which we have through His being there, and sustaining there certain titles of glory, with heaven and with the God of heaven.

The first great titles which shine forth in Christ in *heaven as it is*, are those of LORD and CHRIST, and SON OF GOD.

HEAVEN AS IT IS:

So far as manifested by the setting up of the Church.

Heaven as it *was*, at any period *before* the ascension of the Lord Jesus, is not my topic now; nor, again, heaven as it *will be* in any period *after* that the Lord Jesus has

left the place which He took consequent upon His ascension. Heaven *as it is* (the Lord Jesus being ascended, owned by God, and known to faith, but waiting in patience there), is that to which I limit my present remarks. For the page of Scripture, without any question, as I have said, throws light upon heaven, and the revelations of it and of its ways in various periods that *preceded* the ascension of our Lord Jesus; and also on the different kinds of glory and different ends for which they will be revealed at various epochs *after* that the Lord Jesus shall, hereafter, take a position different from that which He now holds.

Scripture gives us light upon the Lord's course of humiliation; upon His present position, as resting in patience at the right hand of the Majesty in the highest; and on His future course, when the time is come for His glory to be manifested. Into these *three* parts the history divides itself; though it adds much and full testimony, in so doing, to the glory, honour, and dignity of the person of the Lord, and the offices to be sustained by Him. And it is especially in these three chapters of the Redeemer's course, that the light and mind of heaven shines out; but it is the second of them alone, viz., "*heaven as it is,*" which is my topic.

Of course, when the soul turns to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in the divine glory in heaven—the Spirit of God come down here being the power and guide of our faith—of course, I say, we cannot forget either the perfect sympathies of His heart, shown as a man, when in the world, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, on the one hand; or, on the other, the perfect expression of His divine fulness who, on the cross, did receive at God's hand the full judgment due to our sins, that He might separate between us and our sins, and between us and Satan. Himself alive is before us. But, then, while Himself is ever the same, the position and display of Him is now quite other than what it was. He *was* the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; He *is* "crowned with honour and glory." To the heart of Christ Himself, and to the hearts of those that love Him, these two positions awaken very different

thoughts. Each position is perfect in itself, and Himself perfect in each position; but the humiliation and the glory are not *one*, but TWO positions—and two most widely contrasted positions.

If Christ *in resurrection* were my subject, I should have to refer to Matt. xxviii., to Mark xvi., to Luke xxiv., to John xx. and xxi. in detail, as showing the sympathies and graciousness to His own disciples of a risen Lord; but Christ *in ascension*^b is not found in these portions; and heaven is only presented in them directly^c thus: Jesus said, “All power is given unto me in *heaven* and in earth” (Matt. xxviii. 18). “The Lord . . . was received up into *heaven*, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mark xvi. 19). Jesus “led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into *heaven*” (Luke xxiv. 50).

I turn now to some passages in the first seven chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and Peter and Paul. In many details, Acts i. repeats the same things as are mentioned in Luke xxiv. But the contrast between the placing of the facts with that which is peculiar to the two books, is easily seen. The Gospel of Luke gives an outline of the history of the Son of man from His first appearing here on earth, until the curtain drops on Christ's going up into heaven. The Acts give you the entrance within the curtain, with all that follows it. The Gospel leads you on outside right up to the fall of the curtain in Christ's disappearing. The Acts leads you from the inside of the curtain right onward; but Christ Himself within, and the effects consequent thereon.

^b Of course, the mind of heaven, and God's grace toward “the little ones,” was seen in all the displays and showing of Christ to them in resurrection, previous to ascension; but it was *previous* to ascension.

^c I speak of what was manifested in *action*. The various teachings by Christ, of what should be and should come to pass after He was gone, are not forgotten by me. Some of them are found in each of the Gospels; but they most abound in John's Gospel, especially in chapters xiii.—xvii. They may be considered, perhaps, separately hereafter by us.

And here we shall find a gradual development of light about the Lord ascended to heaven. As, 1st, the fact and act of His ascension was presented in a way which addressed itself to the *experience* of the eleven apostles, as men in the body down here; and, 2ndly, there was, as a result of this fact (of the Son of man being in heaven), the doctrine of the coming down of God the Holy Ghost, the promise of the Father, the Spirit of power and of testimony. "Wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me" (Acts i. 4). "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (ver. 8).

Such the doctrine. And connected with that doctrine, as I have said, the fact of His being seen to ascend into heaven. "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." So they returned to Jerusalem, and continued in prayer and supplication. Thereupon, unwonted wisdom^d appeared in Peter, in handling the word of God: a twelfth apostle is consequently chosen; and when the day of Pentecost was fully come, we have the third step onward: "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind; and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts ii. 2—4).

To see their Lord, who was risen from the dead, and had been in and out among them as one risen from the dead, thus ascend up into heaven—a man going up into heaven was a marvellous sight—and to know that this one, their Lord and their God, had been hidden (in the

^d This divine wisdom appeared in Peter, be it remarked, after that Christ ascended, but before the Holy Ghost descended: it is connected with that which is said in Luke: "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (xxiv. 45).

very body in which He was crucified, though it was now glorified) in heaven, was a marvellous secret. But they waited on Him so gone up; and when the time was fully come, they found the fulfilment of the promise of the Father, and this manifest and distinct sign of how they were recognised in heaven as being associates of His; for the Holy Ghost comes down upon them, and in His power they became witnesses of and for their Lord. A Lord risen from the grave had indoctrinated them, and given power of understanding, which appeared in them after His ascension. The Holy Ghost came down, and they heard and saw that which marked His descent and presence; but not only so: for, this descent upon them being a token, from Him who had gone on high, of the recognition He had met with in heaven, they had a testimony to give as to Him their Lord. There was a doctrine which they would have to announce, and there were effects which, in grace, would follow the proclamation of it. True; but there was, as I have said, first of all, in and to themselves, this blessed mark of the delight of the Father in them, as in those who delighted in the One whom He delighted to honour. The promise of the Father is fulfilled; they receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is given; and, in taking the place of witnessing of His having been received up on high, they take His place of testimony which Himself had just left—place which, but for the Holy Ghost (one need hardly say it), they were utterly unable to hold.

The world around understood not the sign, though confounded by that which they witnessed. Peter and the eleven rise up as solvers of the enigma; and let it be remarked how they use the *word of God* as their weapon. Prophecy had told of signs and wonders to precede the coming of the Lord; and it had been written: “And it shall come to pass, that *whosoever*^e shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved” (ver. 21).

^e Divine power, at Babel, had broken up one people into many, by confounding their tongues—many speeches to many tongues—that their haughty pride might thus be hindered in its attempt to shut out God. Divine grace, when the moment comes that *whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, gives tongues, that the mercy may have free course—tongues and many speeches.

Who was that? Why that same Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of Israel, as they themselves knew; whom they, with wicked hands, had crucified and slain: this same Jesus (in order that the hopes of, and promises made to, David might be fully made good, and also in that He was one whose personal glory made it impossible that He could see corruption)—“this Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David . . . saith, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” God had raised Him from the dead, and they had seen Him: God had highly exalted Him, the earth-rejected man; and *He*, having received the promise of the Father, had shed forth, on and in the apostles, the power and signs and testimony which men witnessed and beheld. It was not new wine which was a mocker—a mocker as great as the mockers who wanted to suggest that this expression of the Father’s delight in Jesus, exalted as Son of man, was only the effects of too much wine drunk by the apostles. (Oh the brute-beast stupidity of sin!) Not new wine, but Jesus of Nazareth declared by God in heaven to be both Lord and Christ, and witnessed of thus, by God the Holy Ghost, in those that were the Lord’s friends.

Let the place which *the fear of the Lord* puts man in, when it is acted upon, be here noticed. The apostles had much to learn still; their minds and their consciences and their hearts were still not where the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Hebrews, etc., have put ours. But the fear of the Lord was real in them, and fully practical; and God, in doctrine, began there where He surely *ought* always to begin; viz., in showing the place His Beloved has in His eyes, and how the fullest association and power of association is provided

by Him (through Him who is both Lord and Christ) for all those who fear and wait upon Jesus. If Jesus was Lord and Christ, and owned so by God in heaven, all was theirs. It needed not much wisdom to see that. Though none but God knew how full the blessing was which He had prepared for them, yet this was now seen — that the Holy Ghost was sent down from the anointed Jesus, as the proof and the power of association of His disciples with Himself on high.

The first question for me, I repeat it, is not as to *my* mind, *my* conscience, *my* heart — though, in their proper places, such questions do arise — but, if God's supremacy is to be owned, and God's Christ honoured, *this* must ever be the *first* question for a man, "am I practically associated with the One whom God delights to honour?" The knowing and owning the Christ, is the way into all blessing.

But this word — expression of the blessedness of His disciples — was terror to those that knew Him not. Pricked in their heart, they demand, "What shall we do?" The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and so this question gives occasion to the apostles to show their fellowship with, and understanding of, the grace. Then Peter said, "Repent, and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (ver. 38, 39). Three thousand are added to their blessed company — company which not only enjoyed, but reflected the blessed light of heavenly grace and glory.

The doctrine and fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers, of the apostles' company, had its unearthly, its heavenly marks about it. There was fear upon every soul; wonders and signs by the apostles; fellowship and communion; unselfishness and disinterestedness; gladness and singleness of heart; praise to God and favour with man. Such was the company of saved ones. (See ver. 42 — 47.)

Heaven, Heaven as it is—is thus first brought before us; and thus are we first introduced to it, as it now is.

It cannot be too much noticed, that it was *altogether and entirely* A NEW THING, the fact of Jesus of Nazareth being *in heaven*; he had been *on earth*, a man approved of God among the Jews, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him, in the midst of them.—That same Jesus had been taken by them, and by wicked hands had been crucified and slain; but God raised Him up, because it was not possible that he should be holden of death; this Jesus, raised up from the dead, and by the right hand of God exalted, was now seated in heaven, at Jehovah's right hand, until His foes are made His footstool; that same Jesus, whom man had crucified, God had made Lord and Christ. He was thus glorified as *Son of Man* in heaven, according to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, as Son of God.

And having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He shed forth that which was then seen.

Contrast, if you please, heaven, as thus set forth, with heaven, when at creation:—"The morning-stars sang together, and all the [angels as] sons of God, shouted for joy" (Job. xxxviii. 7); contrast it with the ladder, seen but in a dream, by Jacob, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it (Gen. xxviii. 12); contrast it with the manifestation to Moses in the bush (Ex. iii.); with the glory of God, as seen when Moses went up into the Mount (chap. xxiv. 9—18); or with Is. vi. How far does the revelation of Heaven *as it is*, go in grace beyond all that had ever been? In Heaven *as it is*, all that God is, or has,—all revealed as honouring, as Lord and Christ, and that too in heaven,^f a man whom

^f At the birth of the Lord, in the vision of the angels, the star, etc.; at the baptism of the Lord, when heaven opened upon Him down upon earth, and the Holy Ghost, in bodily form of a dove, bore witness with the favour on high, etc., etc.; while we see that there was all to mark heaven's delight in Him, there was nothing like what took place at Pentecost. Heaven had never found any one on earth, on whom it could open itself,

earth had rejected; and, when the Father has fulfilled the promise to Him, He shedding abroad of its blessednesses upon His people upon earth who believe in Him. And let us not confound counsel, the carrying of it out, and the fruits of its having been carried out, together, as some do. The counsel was from everlasting, about Him who had been known in His own eternity, as the first and the last. But the existence of such a counsel, and its promulgation openly in heaven, and on earth, too, as a counsel accomplished when the work was ended, — which enabled Jesus to take the place as Son of Man, owned of God as Lord and Christ, — were very different in themselves, and in their effects as revealing divine glory, and as the means of blessing, to the people of God. Now, all was done, and the Man whom God delighted to honour, the one who, alone, personally, could be Lord and Christ, was shown out to faith, as Lord and Christ in heaven, the Giver and Sender down of the Holy Ghost.

I only remark further, that all this blessed scene has been made known to us thus, through the words which flowed from the lips of these self-same apostles, as, filled with the Holy Ghost, they uttered that which God the Holy Ghost gave them to speak, as witnessing to the same Jesus.

But the grace and love, which, heaven being thus ordered, showed itself forth in power upon earth, were not to be limited to the forming of a blessed company, however holy and happy that might be. Grace became more loud in its claims for space to display itself in; and, by the healing of one in the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful,^s it opened a way for the claim to

until He came. Heaven opened itself *on* Him, in the days of humiliation. But it opened itself *to* Him, when those days of humiliation were ended, and remained open *on*, and for, and to all those that are His.

^s This originated from God, and was according to no plan of either Peter or John. How strikingly does the watchful mind see, on every side, proofs that in good, God always takes the lead; in evil, Satan; and in weakness, man. Goodness is the essential character of God; evil, of Satan; and man is bad or

be raised, by the servants and ambassadors of heaven, that Israel should open its doors, to welcome the blessing which had long been predicted, as to follow to Israel, when it hailed the prophet who was greater than Moses. In man's rejection of the claim and the judgment forewarned, which would follow, man showed his senselessness, but could not change the grace. "Unto you, first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." The effect of the appeal, we see to have been the conversion of two thousand more (chap. iv. ver. 4).

The authorities resist and persecute; but Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, vindicates God, for having so honoured Jesus as He had. The authorities threaten, but dismiss their troublers. These, returned to *their own company*, make an appeal to God, still to honour the name of His holy Child, Jesus, and heaven's answer to the appeal is not wanting; the place is shaken, all are filled with the Holy Ghost, and speak the word of God with boldness.

It is most blessed to trace the effects of the energy of the Spirit of God, and of Christ in this company in the one mind, and one object between God in heaven, and this company upon earth. The Father honouring the Son at His right hand on high, and the Holy Ghost, down here on earth, expressing, in these blessed ones, a life on earth spent only and solely for the glory of Him whom heaven honoured.

The same truth comes out also in chap. v., though in a different way. For here it enforces the holiness of the

good, as, in his weakness and dependance, he is subject to Satan or to God. Man, as man, never takes, more than *in appearance*, the lead. He is responsible, always; but the course he takes, is the expression of his subjection to another. God and goodness are so inseparable, that wherever you find God, there you find goodness (for His very paths drop fatness, and His very presence is redolent with goodness); and wherever anything good meets you, there you may be sure God has been. On the contrary, Satan and evil are so inseparable, that where Satan is, there mischief is sure to follow, and wherever mischief is, there Satan has been.

house upon earth, and sets Peter forward as one, used of God, to vindicate the holiness of God, very present among them. Holiness and truth, quite as much as grace, must be maintained wheresoever the Lordship of Jesus is owned; be it among a people who own the Christ in heaven, or, be it among those who own Him as Messiah upon earth. He and darkness, cannot go together; and where His power, as Lord, is present, there must be the detecting and purging out of evil; for the heaven of God, never loses its character. Lying, deception, and seeking after credit for self, from man—what have they to do in a house, formed for the manifestation, on earth, of truth, simplicity, and the honour due to the name of Jesus alone? Their appearing there at all, showed the inveteracy of the hatred of Satan, on the one hand, and of the weakness of man, on the other. Their being there, gave occasion, however, for an awful expression of the first judgment of God the Holy Ghost upon them, as things which He could not but judge in His house on earth. They are the formal principles of the sins by which the testimony has, since, while men slept (as Peter, at the hour of their first appearance, did not) been undermined and corrupted. Love of credit and applause from man for self; acting with lying and deceit; with a heart set upon the gold and the silver of the earth—these are the three evils referred to. Satan, working on flesh, through the elements of the world, thus first tried to make an inroad upon the House and the assembly of God upon earth; for the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are still his weapons. But, thank God! in the case before us, the very appearance of the evil, gave but occasion for God to show that the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was more mighty than the world, the flesh, and Satan; and also that, however weak and feeble, the separate stones in the house, looked at in their separateness, might be, when built together for a habitation of God, through the Spirit's presence, the place and the assembly were holy, and had power to detect, rise above, and judge the evil.

The holiness of the house and assembly, having been

thus vindicated, and the impossibility of darkness living, as an energising principle, in the midst of the light of God's assembly, having been shown, we next find how the fresh living water, from its rock on high, fills it afresh. By the hands of the apostles, were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; of the rest, durst no man join himself to them — the people magnified them. Believers were added to the Lord — multitudes. The sick were brought into the streets, and laid on beds, that, at the least, the shadow of Peter, as he passed, might overshadow some of them. Multitudes, also, out of the country round about, brought sick folks, and those which were vexed with unclean spirits — *and they were healed, every one* (chap. v. 12—16.)

Such was *the freshness of the grace* given to this new-formed assembly. Power over the power of evil, to attract the world; to comfort those that came; to provoke to jealousy the opposers. It was the expression of the presence of God the Holy Ghost in the assembly, witnessing of how God in heaven delighted in those upon earth, who entered into His delight in the Christ; but it was a house, an assembly of these associates of Christ, which had this honour. They had it not, save as members of that assembly.

The indignation of the priests is moved; they seize upon the apostles; but what can a prison do, when the angel of the Lord has commandment to open its doors? The malice of the enemy does but create an occasion, the more marked, for a testimony. — “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand — a Prince and a Saviour — for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.”

What could be a more simple explanation of the whole affair? What more cutting to the adversary (ver. 33)? What more suited for the time-serving Gamaliel (34—40)? The spite of the adversary, however, cannot refuse itself

to give a few stripes to the apostles; but even this turns to their confusion, for the Lord fills the hearts of His people with joy, that they are counted worthy to suffer for His name's sake; and, daily, in the temple, and in every house, they teach incessantly, and preach Jesus Christ.

In the next chapter (vi.), we get another proof of the enemy's malice; and that, not displayed in those who were to be cut off, but in those who remained within. Murmuring and discontentment had arisen, because, that, in the administration to daily wants, some widows were neglected. *The things of time* are thus found to give occasion to the adversary, even where daily needs are in question. The difficulty is remedied by those to whom, in common, the purse belonged choosing almoners; and their choice is approved by the apostles. But one of these seven almoners, Stephen, had been chosen of God for another and a higher work as well, namely, to be an especial witness to Israel of its sin; and, through the enmity produced by the testimony thus given, to become the first martyr who went on high. False witness is brought against him; but the help given to him from above is irresistible. His face was as it had been the face of an angel. His answer is based upon the Jewish Scriptures, but contains a summary of God's dealings, and the principle of His dealings with the whole race, from Abraham, downward, which is divinely perfect. Abraham, called of God to be a pilgrim and a stranger, had, indeed, had gifts and promises bestowed upon him. But, as to his descendants, they that were in the flesh, had always risen up against those that were, in spirit, the Lord's, and persecuted them. The Jews had ever cleaved to the outside blessings, and had neither heart nor mind to recognise God. Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, were all witnesses of what a back-sliding people they were. And Solomon, the king, had borne witness, that heaven contained the Lord's throne, and earth was but His footstool. The generation, in Stephen's day, were but like their fathers, stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears — always resisting the Holy Ghost. Which of the prophets had not their fathers

persecuted? What witness to the coming of the Just One had they not slain? That Just One, of whom (said he) ye have now been the betrayers and murderers.

They bowed not to the testimony.

“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”

This is a new and a very important step onward. All that was learnt about heaven, in the earlier chapters, was learnt by the testimony of persons preaching. Here, the heavens open upon the earth-rejected follower of an earth-rejected Christ,—and he sees right up into heaven. And he can speak as one that sees and knows for himself.

Being full of the Holy Ghost, he looks up steadfastly into heaven, sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God — and bears witness to what he sees.

So they stone Stephen, invoking and saying, “Lord Jesus! receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down, and cried aloud, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!” and so fell asleep.

The amazing power of support, which this Abel found, the first of the flock of slaughter, the members of which were to be as killed all the day long, was most gracious; and the whole scene showed, how death of the body as well as life, all things, are ours; for nothing can separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

These seven chapters form a sort of book in themselves, and give us the light and bearing of the glory belonging to Jesus, as Son of man, owned in heaven as Lord and Christ.

As Lord, God will eventually put all His enemies under His feet. Appointed Judge of all, on His word, the fate for eternity of every soul eventually hangs. As universal Lord, 'tis He, who, in the end, puts down death, and locks up Satan in the lake of fire and brim-

stone. Yes; that same Jesus, whom man crucified, will do all this, and much more than this; for all power in heaven and in earth, is given to Him, and He is Lord of all. What a proof of His being Lord of all, *the formation* of that assembly was. In the days of His humiliation, none clave to Him, and, when the Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered. Satan's sway over Jew and Gentile, over the High Priest and Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and over the mob, had seemed perfect. Peter and all the disciples had fled dismayed. But now, on the day of Pentecost, how is everything changed. Peter, James, and John are full of courage; the word of these poor men is mighty, as they speak about Jesus, to arrest three thousand, to cause so large a mass to pass from the kingdom of darkness, right over, and at once, into the kingdom of light. And why and how was this? Jesus was Lord of all, and was now owned as such. He, therefore, endowed with power from on high His servants; and thus He formed upon earth, in Jerusalem itself, where also our Lord was crucified, an assembly for God — an assembly, the very existence of which, as well as its objects and purposes, were the living and abiding proofs of His being Lord of all in heaven. The Church was a new development on the day of Pentecost. A new position was taken by the Lord, as to His dealings with man upon earth, and this Church, the assembly where God Himself dwelt, was the unmistakable proof of it. People get so occupied sometimes with themselves, and with the question of their own consistency, or inconsistency, both with the truth, of which the Church is a proof, and with its hopes, purposes, and callings, as practically to forget that there is a Church to belong to. Now, I could desire, by all means, that we should judge and set aside whatever in us, individually, is practically inconsistent with the position which grace has given to us; but the way to do this, is to have the heart, and mind, and soul, well occupied with the position and privileges, hopes and calling, of the thing itself. And who does not know the blessedness of being able to say: "However much I may fail, blessed be God! He has a Church, and I

belong to it, and the full blessedness of what it is, belongs to me." As has been often said, a stone has a relative value when it has been placed in a building, which it never would have had, had it remained in its individuality. So, a tache of gold, or a loop of a curtain, in the tabernacle, formed *an integral part of the tabernacle of God*, and was to be looked upon and judged *as such*, and not according to its own individual worth. When the tabernacle, in all its parts, was ready, and each part was just what it ought to be, Moses had done his duty so far; he had prepared a tabernacle *for* God. But it was God coming down into the tabernacle, that made it to be the tabernacle *of* God. Much more is true as to the Church. For when the Holy Ghost came down, on the day of Pentecost, it matters not about the parts, whether there were 12, or 120, or 3,000, or 5,000 parts, God the Holy Ghost was there, a witness of, and to, an earth-rejected, but heaven-honoured Jesus. He took the lead; God always has the first place. To the believer, it runs thus: Seeing we have found such grace, what manner of person ought I to be in all holy conversation? All our obedience supposes consistency, with a position of blessing. Ciphers are the expression of nought, when alone; concede one unit, and then the value of the cipher, will be according to its position as to the unit. As to the Church, the energy of blessing supposes many things; and not merely the watchfulness of an individual, to keep himself up to a given standard. For instance, there is *first* the presence of God the Holy Ghost, who *secondly*, has, by the *word*, formed into a body, various quickened persons. Being together, the word truly acts upon the conscience and heart of individuals as such — but it is the word as used by Christ, and empowered by the Holy Ghost. The place is a place of light and conscience, as, therein, both an enlarged arena to act in, and the aid of many keepers, and the company being God's, there are gifts and gifted persons there; and the living God, who, when one fails, puts forward another.

Jesus being Lord, is His title to power and right over all. Jesus being Christ, or Anointed, is His title

to office in testimony, worship, and government. Where He is, He must, of necessity, be the source and spring of all action. All the light which His people possess, is from and in Himself; the answer to all their needs, and their power as to worship in spirit and in truth, are found in Him; and who else, save Himself, either guides His people, or forms and fashions them. There is an interesting and an important difference to notice, between the Christ-hood as for earth, and the Christ-hood as in heaven. The prophet, priest, and king, in Old Testament days, were all anointed, and each office pointed on to the Messiah upon earth. But, Messiah for earth, has no body associated with Him, in the same way as has the Christ in heaven. The prophet has a people to prophesy to — disciples; the High Priest has priests subordinate to him; the king has subjects. The correlative titles of the party inferior, are according to the title of the party superior. *Official* relationships characterize the earth. *Personal* relationships characterize the heavens. The Son of Man has a bride. The Head has a body. The Christ in heaven, has Christians too now upon earth. The Messiah upon earth has not Messiahites. It is not that there is not an unction for the earthly people; but it comes in a different way, attaches itself to a different class of things to what it does in the case of the heavenly people.

In these chapters, again, be it observed, we get the expression of the results of the combination of these two titles, Lord and Christ, Jesus of Nazareth being in heaven. While He acts upon them, He, being in heaven, He forms, and sustains, and directs a Church of God upon earth,—beginning at Jerusalem. He will, at a future time, act upon them, He being on earth; and the millennial earth will be the result. He acts upon them combined together, in both these periods, in grace to man. In the first, God has been showing out, what His delight in Jesus of Nazareth, as Son of Man, Lord and Christ, is, He being in heaven; nothing less than the formation of a *new* body, could express THAT; a body which, in its very elements and essence, its objects, purposes, thoughts, and affections, told forth

fellowship with the Father, in His delight in the Christ. In the second display, He will make good, as Jehovah, His title to place the root and offspring of David, as His fountain of blessing, upon earth. God has a right, if He wills, to have a people upon earth, who are of and for heaven, and who walk as citizens of it; such a people — new as the thought was to man — indeed, unknown till Pentecost, is the expression of the presence upon earth of the Holy Ghost, to make good all the titles which are owned by God and the Father, as being the Son's now in heaven. God has a right, too, when the time shall come, to re-form a people for Himself upon earth—people who shall be willing, in the day of Messiah taking His power, to reign upon earth.

But the titles thus acted upon in combination, whether in heaven or in earth, are for blessing to man; and as power from God in that blessing. A state of *weakness* is no expression of the present power of an Almighty Lord: and power which has not the honour of the Christ of God as its object, is not power divine in man. Power and grace, I conceive, will be found *always* united, when these two names are acted upon together. If I take them separately, I could not say this: for the Lordship has expressions of its glory as *against* and *over* adversaries that are recognised as remaining adversaries; and the activities of Lordship in Jesus have not the same place for them, when He has put down all enemies under His feet, as they have while He is putting down, or showing (as now) His competency to put down. On the other hand, the blessedness of the anointing only becomes more enlarged, when the spheres in which enemies now exist, for the grace of it to be shown to, have ceased to exist.

The revelation of our portion is indeed wondrous. It reveals the glory of the throne of God and the Father, as the resting-place of Jesus of Nazareth, and that Jesus endowed with the promise of the Father; and, consequent thereon, the Holy Ghost come down here to form and sustain a people in whom, upon earth, the virtues of the Lordship and the Christhood of Jesus should abound; while all that the heart of the Son of man feels about

God and His people, is told out to them and in them and by them. It is this which makes the book called the Acts, to be of such peculiar interest to the hearts of the children of God. It gives, truly, the divine explanation of the change from the temple-worship at Jerusalem (being the only one which God recognised for the earth), to the meetings for worship in spirit and in truth, the wide world over, among all that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus out of a pure heart. It gives, truly, the history of the actings of the apostleship of Peter; and the drifting of the testimony, after worship was set up in the Church at Jerusalem, out through Judea, Samaria, and to the Gentiles. It gives the outline, to a certain extent, of the actings of the apostleship of Paul — apostle of the uncircumcision, as Peter was of the circumcision: but it does much more; for it (not only shows us things wrought down here, but) opens to us the scenes above, where the springs of all that was wrought by the Holy Ghost down here, are shown to us; and everything traced up to God's delight, in heaven, in Christ, and the heart of Christ in heaven, faithful to God, and fresh in love to the people of God down here. As we read it, we see and are made to feel that we have, indeed, not a dead Christ—who was merely crucified, dead, and buried—to do with, but one alive again from the dead, and at God's right hand. This, as connected both with one's own soul individually, and with the work that is passing here below in the name of the Lord, is of exceeding importance.

No one can read carefully from chapters i. to viii., without seeing the part and place held by Christ, though Himself in heaven, in the forming and sustaining of the testimony at Jerusalem, and up to the hour of its first formal rejection of it by the Jewish people.

Chap. viii. If God's hand ever moved men upon the board of life, His hand was certainly making itself known in Jerusalem during the period which is brought before us in the first seven chapters of the Acts. His hand was there ordering everything external, and His Spirit ordering all internal to His Church—His church-expression,

here below on earth, of His delight in Jesus, both Lord and Christ, at His right hand in heaven.

What a remarkable incident, Saul's presence at Jerusalem! and his being just in the way to have the young men's clothes (who were the witnesses against and stoners of Stephen) laid down at his feet. While Satan was doubtless in it, there was another than he also in it all—even that One who looked down from heaven on Stephen, and gave to him his testimony and upheld him in it. And what were Christ's thoughts as to Saul? Much, in one sense, what they were about Peter, as found in John xiii. and xiv. If Peter had to be Christ's witness as to Israel's self-sufficient rejection of the Messiah, Peter is first made to know what he himself is, and how he was in no wise better in himself than they. If Saul was to go to the Gentiles, to tell of a heavenly calling, and of fellowship with an ascended and glorified Christ, he is allowed' to prove that grace found nothing in him, when it first looked upon him, but a man who was a persecutor and a blasphemer and injurious. How wondrous are the ways of God; yet how perfect withal!

And let us mark here, too, in another respect, the contrast between the ways of God and the ways of man. Man makes a proffer; and, if it is refused, he too oft finds the springs of his own willingness to give to be choked: his gift rejected, returns with sorrow and pain "to his own soul, to vex him." Not so God. Jerusalem—has it rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost given from heaven by Jesus gone up thither, and sat down there as Lord and Christ? Christ moves on in testimony. He saw Saul there, and doubtless thought of what was coming as to him; but if Jerusalem ceases to be an open channel for the blessing, the waters cannot, according to His heart, reach the Gentiles without Judea and Samaria first getting a benefit. From Jerusalem, in its wickedness and madness, persecution scatters all *save* the apostles, and the cities of Judea thus first get a testimony. Satan might concentrate all his power in Saul. Christ would make it visible that means were not lacking to Him. The apostles shall tarry at

Jerusalem. The disciples, scattered, shall, by the Holy Ghost, tell of that which filled their hearts. Therefore they that were "scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."

Saul's part in the persecution is three times named: "The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul" (vii. 58); "And Saul was consenting unto his [Stephen's] death" (viii. 1); "As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison" (ver. 3). He was a persecutor in thought, word, and deed, whom the heaven-sustained testimony and joy of dying Stephen did not reach; and who had no sense of pity for the weak, or sympathy for the afflicted. What is man, when not subject to God!

The persecution thus arising, Philip is led, in this simple way, to Samaria. The power of God is with him. Miracles are wrought, unclean spirits cast out, the palsied and the lame healed; and great joy filled the city.

Then we find the record of a move of the enemy in a new form—perils of false brethren unawares brought in. Simon, a sorcerer, listens, and takes his place among the disciples.

The news of the movement—most gracious movement—in Samaria, reaches Jerusalem (ver. 14). The apostles send Peter and John, who pray for them, that they may receive the Holy Ghost; then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost (ver. 17). This exhibition of communicative power detects Simon. Who might not long for a share in such a power? True; but *where* was the heart and mind which could see it and overlook GOD, and count that a little silver would induce Peter to sell the power of communicating the Holy Ghost? Alas! what is man? What is flesh in any of us, when it expresses itself, be it placed in the world or in the Church? active amid the excitement of persecution, or active amid the flowing streams of divine grace and power? That which is born of the flesh is flesh.

The effect of all this upon Peter, is to produce anger without sin, though his indignation is strong, and ex-

presses itself with unmeasured strength. The apostles preach the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans, and then return to Jerusalem.

Grace flows on, no longer pent up within the walls of Jerusalem, or to the order of things there. It is pleased to work through Philip; and in a proselyte from among the heathen, who was on his journey back into Ethiopia after the feast. An angel bids Philip go down into Gaza, which is desert: there he finds the Ethiopian eunuch; communicates to his puzzled mind the light of the Gospel, as led by the Spirit of God, and then is caught away.

Samaria was in a circle farther off for the manifestation of God, according to man's mind, and according to God's order too, than was Judea, for worship upon earth. Under the law, there was no worship save in Jerusalem. Under the new order of things, there could be worship in Judea as much as in Jerusalem; for the three great feasts which had to be kept in Jerusalem, had now yielded to the truths as found in a crucified and risen Christ, to which they pointed. But, if Jesus (earth-rejected and heaven-honoured) was the door through which the gift of the Spirit came to all that believed, then Samaria was not shut out; and the water was flowing out still farther. Accordingly, here we have a proselyte who had come all the way from the court of Ethiopia up to Jerusalem, to keep the feast, met by Philip; and his heart made to joy and rejoice as he goes back, not empty-handed, but a worshipper of God in spirit and in truth.

How blessed is the thought of the part which the Lord Jesus, alive in heaven, had in all this! And how blessed, to see how the Holy Ghost orders and arranges everything and every detail for the disciples—just as much and as overtly as the blessed Lord Jesus had done in the days of His humiliation! And, yet, while it is God the Holy Ghost who is directing all, He directs all according to the thoughts and affections of the glorified man, Christ Jesus the Lord, who though in heaven, thinks of all the littleness and all the slowness of His people down here. And so all passes with that leisure

which our littleness and little faith makes meet. And let it be noted, that we have here, not (as before) the Holy Ghost only as in *the assembly* of believers, and working through and with office-bearers and men of note—but, away from the assembly, this same Spirit is found divinely directing and overtly leading *a man* who had been chosen to be an almoner for the saints, yet who now has to go out to a desert-place, and, finding a nobleman in a car there, has to go near and join himself to the chariot. And the same Spirit, as He had manifested His presence once and again with various groups, now catches away Philip, and sends the eunuch on his way full of joy.

What a blessed doctrine is that of the Holy Ghost down here, as Witness of and for Jesus, Lord of all in heaven, and Guardian of the Church and people of Christ! Yea, divine and heavenly blessing it is!

Chaps. ix.—xii. The formation of the Church upon earth; the testimony to, and of it, rejected; the testimony breaking out from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria; a proselyte;—these things we have seen. But the testimony was to take a larger and a wider range yet; and, in the four next chapters, we find the outline of the provision made in connection therewith. Saul's conversion, when he was near Damascus, by direct revelation from heaven, and the mission of Ananias to him, is, together with its consequences, the *first* grand incident (ix. 1—31). The *second* is as to Peter, in the fresh honour put upon him just at this period, in the restoration of Æneas at Lydda (ix. 32—35); the raising from the dead of Dorcas at Joppa (to ver. 43); and the vision to him of the great sheet, with the attendant call to go to the Gentile Cornelius, and its blessed results (chap. x.). The *third* fact is the effect of this first outbreak of mercy to the Gentiles, upon the saints at Jerusalem (xi. 1—19). *Fourthly*, Barnabas gets led to Antioch; and, seeing the need there, he fetches Saul—the Lord leading forth their service, and giving abundant supplies of grace (to end of chap. xi.). Then (chap. xii.) follows the persecution under Herod; the Lord's rescue of Peter; the death of Herod, his iniquity being indeed awfully full.

In entering upon the Lord's dealings with Paul, as the apostle of the uncircumcision, we shall see how the *person* of the Lord comes out, more and more, into light, as the *object*. It is not that, to God's mind, there ever was other centre, or other way of displaying God, than that blessed one; but, clearly, the light may shine out more simply and fully at one time than at another. At first, it was God dealing with the people of Jerusalem, who had rejected the Messiah when He was upon earth; and the leading truth pressed upon them is, that God in heaven had owned as Lord and Christ that same Jesus whom they had rejected. Here (in Paul's case) the blessed Lord reveals Himself in heaven to him; and though it is Jesus who does so, this Jesus is known in heaven as Son of God. The question, in this part, is of what it becomes God to do for His Son, when revealed in heaven as the Second Adam.

Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, arms himself with authority from the high priest, and is then off for Damascus. The Lord makes an appeal to the whole man, as any man upon earth, and in mere nature, could take notice of it. *Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth.* Then (and Oh, what a volume to the renewed heart does the part which the Lord takes in it all contain!) he heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Aye, *why?* What reason had Saul for persecuting Jesus? But what grace for a glorified Lord, for the Son of God, thus to offer to hear what a rebellious creature has to say in vindication of his most unreasonable opposition. The query was well framed, and drew forth another question in reply from Saul: "Who art Thou, Lord?"^h The voice of a man had addressed Him; the voice of a man ushered in by a display of divine effulgence, of a Man in

^h There is something here (to my soul at least) very remarkable. Saul is challenged as being a persecutor by the Lord. Had his own self-fulness been still in dominion, he would have vindicated himself, perhaps. But another, though it were One not personally known, has the upper place in his soul: he does not vindicate himself, but asks *who* the other is?

heaven, who asserted that *He* was the object of the persecution of Saul of Tarsus. "*Who art Thou?*" was a natural question; but it would not have been the fair expression of Saul's state: he knew now that he had to do with another than a mere man; and the conscious conviction of the divine character of the revelation, comes out in his using the word *Lord*. "*Who art Thou, Lord?*" Had Saul ever before been an enquirer after divine glory? Had he not rather taken it for granted, that he knew intuitively all about God, and what he had to do for God? I judge that he never, until now, had really found himself in the divine presence—never knew how man needs to be taught of God. "*Who art Thou, Lord?*" 'T was a simple question, and the answer is as simple: "*I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*" "*I am Jesus.*" What a simple word! and how simple, too, that which qualifies it!—"I am Jesus, *whom THOU persecutest.*" Of the truth taught here, there can be no mistake: it is Christ, as the Head of a body, who speaks here; feeling in Himself that the Saul who was before Him, had been acting most rudely and cruelly; though not He, the Head, but the members of His body alone, were within Saul's reach.

Love leads Christ, here, to present Himself as being personally concerned: he that touched a Christian, touched a member of that body, the Head of which was Christ. But grace adds another word too: "*It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*" When almighty power closes up a man's way, who shall break through, or set aside the power of *the Lord*? Overwhelmed, he demands: "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" Entire, personal surrender of himself is what I here see. He is told to go and seek the help of one of those poor despised sheep, whose lives he had come down to destroy. Saul arises from the earth; and is led by the hand, being blind, into Damascus. The Lord's love does not hide itself, does not even bring things to pass merely in a providential way. He who alone could curb and bow such a spirit as was Saul's, had been pleased Himself to meet with him, and to curb and bow that spirit: He,

Jesus, had Himself set Saul at his wit's ends—at points which he had never known before—in positions in which for the first time in his life he had ever said to Jesus, “Who art thou, Lord?... What wilt thou have me to do?” But the gracious love in Christ, which moved thus with power, kept Saul in the consciousness of dependence, and formed the longing in his heart after discipleship. It is He, too, who Himself speaks to Ananias in a vision; and having called his attention to Himself, then bids him (Ananias) “arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; *for, behold, he prayeth*, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.” Saul had come down to seek the life of such as Ananias: Christ exposed not Ananias to the uncurbed, unbroken Saul; but, having broken Saul down, He, in the sovereignty of His own power, and in full accordance with the thoughts of God, that the word of God spoken by men should be honoured, and that the disciples should have the fullest fellowship possible with the Master—He, I say, will use the word of Ananias to perfect the work Himself had commenced. Ananias demurs (ver. 12—14): Surely, the Lord would not let in such a wolf upon the flock which Ananias loved! But the Lord is imperative; and yet, withal, how considerate to Ananias in his little faith! “Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name unto the Gentiles, and kings, and children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.” What a Lord He is! and how perfectly, in every way, does He carry out the duties which rest upon Him, as Head of His body, the Church, toward all the weakest and least intelligent members in the body!

Ananias goes. His “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost,” is not without effect: for “immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized”: a token, this, of the Lord's love to

Ananias. Saul joins himself to the disciples: "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that *He is the Son of God.*"

Persecution arises (ver. 23): the disciples took him by night, and ignominiously let him down by the wall in a basket. He had not much to boast of in this, according to the flesh. But the same flesh which had run riot when he was Satan's servant, needed, in him as in us all, constant crippling, that he might be able to serve the Lord.

Arrived at Jerusalem, the disciples stand in doubt of him (ver. 26). But Barnabas befriends him when standing outside the door (so to speak), and he is accredited (ver. 27). His bold testimony again exposes him to persecution, and he is sent off to Tarsus.

There was rest to the Churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and edification; and the disciples, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. When man acts, too oft a new friend or servant leads to the forgetfulness of the old. Not so with the blessed Lord. All He did remained in its perfectness; and every part of His plan, and every workman whom He called, had due regard and attention paid to him.

Peter is not forgotten because Paul has appeared. One Lord is Master of them both. Æneas, sick of the palsy for eight years, is restored by Peter (ver. 33, 34). The testimony spreads (ver. 35). Dorcas falls on sleep at Joppa; but Peter is used to confound all, by raising her from the dead (ver. 36—41).¹ The testimony flows outward thereby. Peter, tarrying at Joppa, lodges with one Simon, a tanner. There was nothing marvellous in that: others, perhaps, had lodged there often before. Ah! but the Lord meant to make the house of Simon

¹ If the healing of the man in the Beautiful Porch (in chap. iii.) is typical, and points to the same truth as the healing of the impotent man in the Pool of Bethesda (John v.)—viz., God's readiness to supply all the power that Israel wanted, in order to enable it to act for and with God—then Dorcas's restoration from death is typical too, and shows how the same power which suffices for the circumcision, is a power of resurrection from the dead.

a house to be remembered; and therefore, on *this* occasion, Peter turns in thither. How exquisitely simple is the account given to us, in chap. x., of Cornelius' vision at Cæsarea! and how bright the scene is, as a scene in which the living affection and energy and occupation of Christ towards His people is displayed!

A bell and a pomegranate. A bell and a pomegranate round the high priest's vesture, was to announce where he was on certain occasions of tabernacle and temple worship. But here we have more than that; viz., all the fruitful love of the Lord toward His people showing itself in the arrangement of everything connected with the enlargement of the sphere of testimony. The Gentiles, as such, were to have the word of grace preached to them. Cornelius is chosen as the first who is to be called, and Peter is selected as the one first to call a Gentile: for this would make still more clear the principle on which God was now acting. But here the Gentile was a seeker of God, and has himself to send for Peter to come to him. The Lord, by His angel, tells him to send for Peter; and tells him, too, where the said Peter is to be found. Cornelius promptly obeys, with all due attention. On the morrow, while the messengers are a-journeying, Peter is on the house-top. He falls into a trance, and "saw heaven opened upon him, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." And then a voice is heard, saying, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." *Peter objects: he had never eaten any common or unclean thing.* The same voice is heard a second time: "What God has cleansed, that call not thou common." This was done thrice, and then the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Peter understands not, but Cornelius's messengers are at the door.— Peter muses; but the Spirit said to him: "Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them" (ver. 20). How blessedly does the part and place which God the Holy Ghost, down

here, has undertaken to fill up — responsively to Christ up in heaven — here shine out. When the Son of Man was on earth, He listened, morning by morning, for instructions as to what next He, in His servant course, should do. And He was led and guided perfectly by the Spirit. Now, He, as Son of Man, is gone up into heaven, and His people down here. The Spirit is with them, to guide and direct in all the ignorance, which is natural to them, each step of the way. And all down here is to be according to what Christ up there is doing. This is beautiful and blessed. The Son of Man would walk down here as a pilgrim, and was led here and led there by the Spirit. Now, we, who know nothing, get the perfect guidance of the Spirit; and that as a part of, and means to practical fellowship with Christ in heaven.

Peter goes down, and presents himself as the person whom the three men seek. They explain their business. Peter shows them hospitality for the night, and starts with them next morning for Cæsarea. Cornelius and his friend are awaiting their coming; for the vision of an angel was not a common-place matter to such an one as Cornelius. He meets Peter, and would have rendered him homage, such as Peter could not receive. Peter explains what he is; and then Cornelius explains why he had sent for him. Peter owns the exceeding largeness of the principle upon which God is now acting (vers. 34, 35). He then gives the brief outline of that which he himself had known of Jesus, as a man upon earth, and a witness for God; of His experience here at man's hand, and afterwards how God had raised Him from the dead; shown Him to His friends; and that He was to be preached as the appointed^j judge of quick and dead; the One, in whom every one that believes, finds forgiveness of sins, as witnessed by all the prophets.

While Peter is discoursing, the Holy Ghost falls on all that hear, to the no small astonishment of those of

^j This is a statement not made before. Jesus being the appointed Judge of quick and dead, clearly placed all men, and, therefore, these Gentiles, at the bar of His judgment.

the circumcision who were present, who marvelled, because, that on the Gentiles also, was poured out the gifts of the Holy Ghost, with all signs, and the power of worship.

Peter then asks: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?"

The entire unpreparedness of man, for such an extension of the blessing, divine and heavenly blessing, as would, necessarily, pass over all distinctions in the flesh and world, now appears. Peter is called to account in Jerusalem, on his return, for his practical inconsistency; he had eaten with, and in the house of, men uncircumcised (ver. 4). He relates the vision he had had; the concurrent testimony to it, of the facts of the men coming; the injunction of the Spirit to him, to go without doubting; his six brethren with him;—he had gone to the house of Cornelius; had heard of the angel's instructions to Cornelius;^k and, lo! while he was himself speaking, the Holy Ghost had fallen on the Gentiles, as He had on them who were Jews at the beginning. This had recalled the Lord's own words to him: "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost." For as much then, as God gave these the like gift, as he had given unto the others, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, what was Peter, that he should withstand God?

The circumcised bow to the truth of mercy having thus reached the Gentiles (ver. 15), even repentance and life.

In the meanwhile, and it was another step connected with the establishing the same truth, of the enlarged measure of bliss, Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch became evangelised, so far as the Jews and Hellenists are concerned, by means of those whom the persecution had scattered.

Barnabas is sent down from Jerusalem, that he might confirm the work at Antioch. He does so, and then starts for Tarsus, seeking Saul, and bringing him (not

^k What a place of honour does the ascended Lord assign to His servants? "Who (that is, Peter) shall tell thee words, whereby thou, and all thy house, shall be saved" (ver. 14).

Peter) to Antioch; where they tarry a whole year, and are greatly blessed. Antioch (which is more connected with Paul, as the starting place of his labours), is thus brought into view. And the disciples got their name of Christians first at Antioch (ver. 26).

An act of love and power on the Lord's part, here occurs, and marks how He will have all knitted together in one.

Prophets come down from Jerusalem to Antioch; the Spirit signifies by one of them, Agabus, of a great dearth a coming. The disciples make a collection for brethren in Judea. Barnabas and Paul take it up (ver. 27—30).

In the midst of the famine, the Lord had shown His love, which knows how to gather and to glean occasions of displaying itself, in blessing every where; he does so, again, chap. xii., in the midst of a persecution. Herod persecutes; kills James with the sword, and lays hands on Peter, casting him into prison. But prayer rises in his behalf. An angel is sent to open the prison gates, and bring him out. Peter is asleep, between two soldiers, bound with two chains; but light shines into the prison; the chains fall from his hands, and he arises and follows the angel; they pass the first and second wards; the iron gate, into the city, opens of its own accord to them. Peter is alone outside. He hastes to the house of prayer, to announce the Lord's mercy, and then retires. The ado next day in and about the prison, can be conceived. But the cup of Herod's iniquity is now well nigh filled up. Sycophancy and adulation are ready to be offered by those who thought to turn his pride to their own benefit, and the shout arises from his flatterers: "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." The angel of the Lord smote him with a loathsome disease.

God has not ceased to be God, nor has He ceased to exercise a governmental restraint over, and judgment upon, nations, because He has set grace in the Church, and rules there. The book of Jonah shows us, that it was so, also, when He was God of Israel upon earth. To day, His sway in *the world* is in exercise; kings and

emperors, kingdoms and empires, though energised in by powers of darkness, are not outside of the governmental survey of God.

In chap. xiii., 9—11, there is another instance of the Lord's grace. Barnabas and Saul return from Jerusalem, their work there being ended (chap. xii. 25), and are found (chap. xiii) gathered at Antioch, with certain others.

Then and there the word comes "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them (ver. 2).

Thus sent forth by the Holy Ghost (ver. 4), they begin a progress or course of preaching and testimony; Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, John being with them, as their minister.

It is to be noted, that this is the time when Saul's name is changed to Paul in the Book. The circumstances are to be remarked, too. They were before Sergius Paulus, a man who wanted to hear the Word of God. Elymas, a sorcerer and false prophet, and a Jew, who was with Sergius, opposed them, and the progress of the faith.

Then Saul (who also is called Paul)¹ filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes upon him, and said, "O, full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil—enemy of all righteousness—Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? 'And, now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And, immediately, there fell on him, a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand." The deputy Sergius receives the word.

We may remark here, that the mission of the first preachers of the Gospel outside of Jerusalem, and the mission of Barnabas and Saul from Antioch, were very different. The twelve apostles had been the holders of

¹ The name of Saul occurs seventeen times in this book; the last place in which it is found, is this, chap. xiii. 9. The name of Paul begins to be used here, and is found 134 times in this book. Peter's name occurs fifty-eight times; the last occurrence is in Acts xv. 10.

authority in the Church at Jerusalem; yet (not did they send, but) persecution scattered abroad, throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, the first preachers in those parts of the Gospel: it was an effect of Providence, that they were scattered (viii. 1); grace led them, everywhere, to speak of Him they loved (ver. 4). It is the Holy Ghost who says to the prophets and teachers who were gathered together in prayer at Antioch, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (chap. xiii.). In this case, the mission is manifestly directly from God in the assembly.

From Paphos they go to Perga; whence John departs from them, returning to Jerusalem. But they go onward, whither the Spirit led them, to Antioch, in Pisidia. There, in the synagogue, Paul gave his testimony on the seventh day (ver. 16—41), with no little blessing. The Jews leave the synagogue; the Gentiles beg to hear the word again. Many of the Jews and proselytes follow Paul and Barnabas, who persuade them to continue in the grace of God. Next Sabbath, all the city, so to speak, comes to hear. Envy moves the Jews against the words spoken by Paul; they contradict and blaspheme. This forces these servants of the Lord to make good the position to which their work led them. They warn the Jews, and turn, in the most formal way, to the Gentiles. This is so important a step in their course, that we may as well quote the text: "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (ver. 45—48).

The word spreads (ver. 49). The unhappy Jews stir

up persecution, and thrust the word and the Lord's messengers of it from them; but they, shaking off the dust of their feet against them, come to Iconium: and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

At Iconium, the testimony again begins in the synagogue: there is decided blessing (xiv. 1), and opposition (ver. 2). But the Lord is with them in power (ver. 3); persecution ensues. They pass on to Lystra and Derbe (ver. 6). At Lystra, Paul displays his power on a cripple who had faith to be healed. The mob salutes them as gods, and would make Barnabas to be Jupiter, and Paul Mercury (he being the chief speaker). They protest against the blasphemy (ver. 8—18); and in the next verse (19) we read, that Jews came down from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and having stoned Paul, they drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. But the mercy of the Lord was, in this case, above the enemy's spite and the disciples' fears; for as these last stood round Paul, he rose up and came into the city: thence he is onward to Derbe; back to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

They seek to settle the souls of the disciples in faith and patience (ver. 22), appoint elders in every assembly, and commend the disciples to the Lord with prayer. They pass onward, through various places, back to Antioch, whence they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled; and there relate what they have passed through—all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

The next chapter is one of peculiar interest in many respects. It contains an account of the effort made by some coming from Judea, to legalise the brethren at Antioch, through a false place given by them to the ordinance of circumcision. The disciples determine to take up the matter, and to send up Paul, Barnabas, and others to the head-quarters of such teaching. They go up, spreading joy everywhere by the blessed news of the conversion of the Gentiles. At Jerusalem they are received, announce the same good news, and set forth

the legalizing teaching complained of. Peter (and it is the last time he appears in this book) takes his place as *the one* whom God had chosen among them, that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe.

God had given to the Gentiles the Holy Ghost, as well as to the Jews: He had put no difference between the two; both were to have the heart purified by faith. Why, then, tempt God, and put an unbearable yoke on the necks of disciples? Such was his thought. "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (ver. 11). Barnabas and Paul then declare what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them (ver. 12). James confirms Peter's judgment (ver. 13—21). The apostles and elders of the whole Church send forth their written judgment by Barsabas and Silas, chosen men of their own company, who are to go down with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch (ver. 22—29). This, which seemed good to the Holy Ghost and them at Jerusalem, is in a very solemn way made known at Antioch; and they were glad (ver. 30, 31). Judas and Silas aid in the work; and, even when let go in peace, still please to stay on there (ver. 32—34).

Paul, after a time, proposes to Barnabas to repeat their former excursion: they split upon the question of companions. The contention was sharp, and issued in Barnabas taking Mark (who on the former occasion had turned back from the work), and sailing for Cyprus (alas! his native place); and Paul departs with Silas, being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God—no little matter that.

Here I close: for my subject was not the apostleship of Paul, but *Heaven as it is*, so far as it manifests itself in the setting up of the Church upon earth. We have seen the expressions of *heaven as it is* in acts; and we have seen deeds which proclaim the love and wisdom and power of God and of Jesus in heaven, owned now as Lord and Christ and Son of God, and of the Holy Ghost come down to earth. The aggressiveness of the love; the pertinacity and faithfulness of it; the way that

power, in Providence and circumstances, acts, so as to make good the purposes of love where man fails to understand the Spirit's mind and teaching, and the depth and wisdom of the Lord's ways—are all to be noted and admired. What a master-stroke is found in the choice of Saul of Tarsus, the leader of the persecution by the circumcision, to be made the apostle of the uncircumcision! What depth in using the very persecution as the means of spreading the word everywhere; and that, too, when the Jerusalem prejudices of the twelve apostles had hindered them in understanding and in going forward with the commission they had received!

Jerusalem, and the testimony presented there by the Church, and renewed in various ways; the cities of Judea; Samaria; a Gentile proselyte; the Gentile Cornelius, and those with him—these were the trophies of grace in connection with the circumcision: the circumcision, as such, being clearly a mark for earth. The call of Saul as apostle of the uncircumcision—called from heaven, and sent by the Holy Ghost—is another thing. And the gradual leading of Saul through all the questions which seemed on earth to entangle his freedom, and his coming out in the close of this chapter, not with Barnabas, who had befriended him (ix. 25) and counted on him (xi. 25), but with Silas (whom he chose, xv. 40, and) whose working propensities had approved themselves at Antioch, is remarkable, and tells of a mind in heaven which was directing everything for him.

The differences between the Church when at Jerusalem, and the Churches of heavenly disciples the wide world over, would tell many a tale of the perfectness of the same wisdom, love, and power, had we room to go into them.

For divine and heavenly grace, acting upon a limit which was confined by its connection with Jerusalem (God's self-chosen centre for earthly dealings), could not express itself in the same free way as it chose for itself when its connection was (not with Jerusalem upon earth, but) with Jesus as Son of God in heaven—earth-rejected, though owned in heaven as Lord and Christ.

N^o. XVIII.

THE WORK OF GRACE FOR, AND THE WORK OF GRACE IN, MAN.

“THEN were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth” (Mat. xxvii. 38—44).

“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke xxiii. 39—43).

THE SAVIOUR, the Son of Man, was dying: the just One in place of the many unjust; bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. This was His great work *for* us. But of the two malefactors, between whom He was crucified, both of whom had reviled Him—one became converted, and showed a work of grace wrought *in* him.

The work of grace *for* us, and the work of grace *in* us, are not one and the same thing, any more than the death of Christ *for* the thief, and the change *inside* the thief (by the means of which he ceased to be a blasphemer and owned Jesus), were one and the selfsame thing. The former is outside of us, and was *in* and *by*

CHRIST; the second is *in ourselves*, though wrought there by grace.

I desire to present a few thoughts which are connected with this most important subject.

And first: what is it which hinders God and a sinner meeting and being together. True: the sinner's will is opposed to God; his heart's affections, too, are alienated from God; and, doubtless, if he, as a sinner, were in the light of God's presence, he would find, soon enough, that the light of God's presence discovers all the sin of the creature. But *the* difficulty was not in the creature, however sunk, alienated, and deluded he may be, and however unsuited for such a one the holiness and majesty of God's presence may be. There was another question, one of far higher and deeper import, viz., How could God, in His holiness and righteousness, meet a sinner who has, by sin, done dishonour to God? Sin is an insult to God,—to God in His majesty and being,—and the soul that gets into light knows this to be so.

So far as God is concerned, the work of grace *in* us is never separated from the work of grace *for* us. From the day of the fall and of man's exclusion from Eden, God wrought *in* man, but always upon the ground of the work which He meant to do *for* man. And in working thus *in* man he has constantly presented some object to the mind, in which the work *for* man was shadowed forth. The sacrifice offered by Abel; the victims of the patriarchal worship; the sacrifices of the sanctuary, etc., all pointed onward to the work which Christ was to do *for* man, work by which alone God could be just while justifying a sinner, work which alone can ever satisfy the conscience of a sinner in the presence of God about sin. But the work *in* man preceded the work *for* man in all these cases. At Calvary, the Son of Man gave Himself a ransom for us. From that day onward, the work of grace *for* man has had nothing added to it, nothing new from the time that by one sacrifice He perfected for ever them that are sanctified. But though the work *for* man is finished, yet is the work of grace *in* man quite as needful now as ever. That it is wrought *in* man by the Holy Ghost, through faith in the work

accomplished *for* man, is true; but it must be wrought *in* man or man is lost.

The peculiarity of the conversion of the thief upon the cross is, that it is a case in which grace was working *in* a man to open his heart to Christ, *at the very moment* that Christ was doing *for* man that work without which no way was opened for God to bless, nor open for man to come for blessing.

On this account the distinctness of the two things is the more easily seen, and this may help some to see how they should not confound them together, and how impossible it would be for the one to be exchanged so as to be made to take the place of the other.

Justice had brought the two thieves, for their misdeeds, to the violent death of the cross. There, they were surrounded by a mass, who (cared not for them, but who) were gathered to the spot to revile and blaspheme the dying Saviour.

The thieves heard the revilings, and adopted them, for they cast the same in his teeth. But an entire change came over one of them. Light broke in upon his soul, and in its case it was the light of life—eternal life.

God had taken His rightful place in the man's soul. The effect is immediate; and, remark—he rebukes his fellow-malefactor: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." When the candle of the Lord searches a man, it is sure to discover sin in him to himself. It must be so; for righteousness and holiness are inseparable from the light of God; and man is unholy. The light detects and shews the unholiness. Yet is there in this experience of the thief also another feeling expressed. He knew sin to be inseparable from himself—he knew it, and yet he sought to put it down with an unhesitating mind. He rebukes his fellow-malefactor for doing the very thing which himself had done just before, and the which he had but just ceased to do.

This was, as man would count it, practically inconsistent. Quite so. Conscience, when it gets into God's

presence, and has the light of life, acts in a way which is very inconsistent with human thoughts of consistency and propriety. He was inconsistent as a man, but consistent as a saint. 'Tis strange, that first-dread and hatred of sin which leads us to put our mouths in the dust and to condemn sin in ourselves—part of our being as it may have been. But it is a blessed instinct of the new life, of life divine in a soul: that sin must be condemned, for it is hateful. This true taste of what sin is, is a very different thing from the dread of the consequences of sins. Dread of the consequences of sin and sins may alarm and terrify the soul, and drive it to seek a Saviour. But the light of life shining, in quickening power, into a soul, separates between it and the sin itself: gives it an altogether new estimate of what sin is. “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” How full—both in the general statement and in the particular detail is his confession of sin: what an abandoning and disclaimer of all human righteousness. “We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.” And it was light, not vague and ill-defined, that shone in upon his soul, but clear and distinct; for it was the light of a contrast between the Christ of God and himself: “But this man hath done nothing amiss.” Himself and the Christ were in his conscience, contrasted the one with the other. His language was that of faith; and, little as he knew it, he was, in the hour of the Lord’s being forsaken by all, giving the description of Him which will be owned of God to be true of Christ alone. “This man hath done nothing amiss” will be loudly proclaimed as true of Christ alone in the glory; and all of us that will be there will know and own the perfectly graphic, distinctive description, as being His alone. Of Adam’s race, not one, from Eden down to the placing of the great white throne, not one, save the seed of the woman, of whom it could be said in truth, “This man hath done nothing amiss.”

God; sin; himself; the man that is Jehovah’s fellow—these were not only new experiences of his soul, but

they marked that he had a new life—and had got into a world of light, where things are seen just as they are. But his faith went further, and he sees not only the personal peculiarity of the sinless one at his side, but, also, that there was in him a heart on which, spite of all the contrast between the Christ and himself, he might cast his every care. “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” The glories, and the kingdom, and the majesty of the Lord brake in upon his soul—sinner as he was—and yet he saw that in that One there was the only rest, the alone hope for him. This, also, is an instinct of the new nature. It will see and own the contrasts between the Christ and what we are, but it will cleave to him in spite of our misery and His gloriousness,—it will cleave to Him as being all our salvation.

If we are to be vessels filled with grace, we may be assured that there has been a somewhat similar work wrought *in* us—and we shall be able to record it as a work of the Lord in us—a work which puts us just where the Lord’s work in the thief put him, viz., into the position of expecting from the Lord, into a position in which the Lord could shew some of the exceeding riches of His grace as He did in His answer to the thief. The thief asked to be remembered in the kingdom: Jesus answered, “Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Christ had His rightful place in this poor sinner’s soul, and no mistake about it, and this place was His from the time that the rocky heart was riven open. But what the thief experienced in his own soul—the blessed work which God was doing in the soul of the poor thief, while it fitted him to receive the grace, could not appear in heaven in place of the blood of the Lamb of God: there it could neither justify God in justifying a thief, nor discover to the thief that which, in the light, is his justification before God. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Christ was then and there shedding His blood, giving His life, the just one in place of the unjust. And whether that poor thief, or any other sinner, were ever saved or not—He, risen from the dead and gone into heaven, the way is plainly set forth, in

which God declares that he is free to bless the vilest of the vile;—the way, too, in which the vilest of the vile that comes by it finds a way of peaceful access to God. If no one upon earth cared for that new and living way, yet *it is a new and living way*, and it is open: open for God the Holy Ghost to come down by, and open for man to draw nigh to God, even into the holiest of all in the heavens. The work of grace *in* us cannot be substituted for, cannot be put in the place of, this the work of grace *for* us; the work of grace *in* me cannot vindicate God's holiness so as to justify Him in moving in favour of me, a sinner. And, clearly, so far as it is a work of grace wrought *in* me by God, God has moved in my favour to work it ere it ever was wrought.^a And, moreover, it contains in it, for just the self-same reason, no answer to my conscience if it is in the presence of God—nothing that can make for me a perfect conscience.

God has a right to act without man's leave, and in spite of man. None can say unto Him, "What doest thou?" But then He has a character of His own, which He will not deny. And if He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion, He does so in a way which thoroughly vindicates His holiness and His justice, in a way which elevates conscience in man, while it gives to it perfect liberty and boldness of approach unto God in the light.

People may argue against justification by faith alone; but they may depend upon it, that if they ever find themselves in the same light of life in which the poor thief found himself, they will find that they themselves appear very miserable, and that there is an attractive beauty about the Christ, who is all the salvation of the soul.

Many may turn faith into a work for themselves to work; but they will find that the Spirit convicts of

^a People may look at the incorruptible seed in the Christian, and say, that it is a reason for God to act, viz., because it is of God. But then how came God to put it into me? How was His holiness, His justice, vindicated in this standing up for me at all? The blood of Jesus Christ is the alone answer.

unbelief; and that all their rest is in the Lord Himself, and in the work He has wrought *for* poor sinners.

From the fall until Christ died, God renewed souls, and this was at once His instrument of doing it; and the reception of it was the only warrant before Him; the reception of the testimony He might be pleased to give about the seed of the woman that was to come. All His actions supposed that work to be sure and certain. From the day of Pentecost the testimony of God has been about that work itself, and how heaven was opened thereby for the Holy Ghost to come down, and for man to draw near by faith.

Where the testimony of God is received, as, for instance, about Christ as a new and living way (see Heb. x.), the soul that receives it finds its assurance to be in the work itself so presented to it; not in its own feelings, thoughts or experiences about it, but in the work ITSELF. For so has God been pleased to settle it. The light shining in brings with it its own testimony. It places me in the sight of God upon His throne in heaven, where He has placed Christ, who bare sin in His own body on the tree, that He might become the new and living way of blessing from God to man, and of approach by man to God.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed as the God who has provided Himself a lamb, that His mercy and His compassion might be evident before all—heaven opened upon them.

That the heart of man is so wicked and so deluded, that it cannot, will not, believe such things of God is true; and in this is seen the awfulness of man's condition. It must meet God, and it hates Him, and loves to nourish hard thoughts of Him. But when the light of life does break in, it is its own evidence. Its entrance may not be understood at first; but the light will be found to be evidence of the subject whence it comes, and will be found to be the light of life.

Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins (Matt. i. 21).

N^o. XIX.

MANIFESTATION OF GOD.

See Ex. xxxiii., xxxiv. John i.—x.

“HE that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” And yet, surely, this diligent seeking of God is to be conducted by us in our true character. We are not to seek Him as wise ones, or as righteous ones, as those who are either competent to know Him, or worthy to reach Him, of themselves. Our diligent seeking is to be in such character as, without disguise or doubt, we bear in His presence. The schools may make Him their subject to discuss Him, but that is not the seeking of faith. When faith would seek Him, it is a sinner that is seeking Him—and He is found of such. The revelation is then made; and the soul, in more or less brightness, walks in the light of the Lord.

And this light in which the sinner that has sought Him walks, is *full* light. God must come forth in *all* His goodness, ere a sinner can walk with Him. Partial revelation of Himself will not do for a sinner. It would keep him still at a distance. It must be “all His goodness,” His full glory, “the glory of God in the face of Jesus.” This, but this only, will do for a sinner. And that is the light *of the Lord*. It is the revelation of Himself. And blessed is the thought, that God fully revealed, and a sinner thoroughly convicted, may meet, and do meet, and that for eternity.

The woman of Samaria in John iv. was convicted. But she continued in the light that had convicted her—and thus, her vessel being opened, she was ready to receive what Christ was to her, and had for her. “I that speak

unto thee am He," said Jesus, shortly after—and her heart was filled, and filled for ever.

This may suggest the general character of John's gospel to us.

"The Word" is the characteristic title of the Son in that gospel; because He is the One who declares God, and reveals or manifests the Father.

Accordingly, when returning, in spirit, to the Father, as at the end of His ministry, in chap. xvii., and laying down that ministry as now fulfilled, He says, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." And accordingly, also, at the end of His days, on earth, in chap. xviii., He says, when answering the Roman governor, "to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

For, the Lord is not a judge, but a witness, in this divine gospel by John; not a judge of man, but a witness of God. And that is by far the higher character. God is His object and subject, as I may say. To declare Him, to manifest the Father, is His business. The law may publish rules of righteousness, making man its object; the prophets may tell of divine counsels, making God's purposes and plans and government their object; but God Himself is Christ's object—to declare Him or to reveal the Father, is the purpose and business of the Son.

And this revelation of God, which is thus the business of the Word made flesh, is, really, the important thing in the moral history of this world. But the thought of man's heart is different. Man makes himself principal; even *religious* man does so. To have his heart regulated, his ways ordered, his character improved and cultivated, and the good estate of the scene in which he has his daily being, maintained and advanced, this is the great end or object, according to the religious thoughts and moral energies of man. As we may see in chap. ix. The disciples say to Jesus, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind." They were thinking of law and of retribution, making *man* the principal in the religious speculations of their mind. But the Lord's answer shews us which was principal

with Him. "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." According to this, the regulation of man, or the ordering of the world in moral retributive power, was not the great thing, but the revelation of God.

Here, however, we are to introduce ourselves to another truth.

In this revelation of God, which the Lord Jesus thus made principal in the moral history of the world, the sinner's salvation is involved. It would not be a manifestation of God, if it did not suit itself to the need of sinners. There are secrets, divine secrets, secrets about the blessed One, which would be kept back in any dispensation, but that of grace to sinners. God would have no sphere for the making of Himself fully known, but in a self-ruined world. So that, while in John's gospel, the Son is "the Word," or the declarer of God, we find Him fulfilling that ministry in the midst of sinners, and none else. He refuses to shine in any glory but that of the light of *life*. He will be a judge in due time, He will be a king in due time, He will shew Himself to the world in the appointed day of power—but all this, in John's gospel, He refuses. He was the light of life. The glory that was in Him was full of grace and truth, a glory suited to sinners, and He would not be a judge or a king, a doer of wonders according to His mother's wish in John ii., nor an exhibitor of Himself to the world, according to His brothers' wish in John vii. He was the light of *life*, and that only. His business was to declare God, to manifest the Father, and that must be, in grace to sinners.

This is simple, and shews itself with self-widening certainty and clearness in John's gospel.

But being this, being the light of life, He is "the light of the world" also. He is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He passes partition-walls. He is not merely in the midst of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, as in Matthew, but He is for "as many as received Him." He does not, in John, sav. as to a Syro-phœnician, "Let the children first be

filled;" but at once revealing Himself in fullest, richest grace to a sinner of the Samaritans, He says, "I that speak unto thee am He." And He will abide two days in a village of that people, finding in Sychar of Samaria the home most suited to Him on earth, next to Bethany of Judea. For Bethany or Sychar, Samaritans or Jews, will do equally well for Him who is the light of life, the light of the world, the Saviour of sinners.

But further. If God thus reveal Himself, it is the way of faith to look and to listen. Faith desires, and receives this invitation. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day," says the Lord, "and he saw it and was glad."

In Ex. xxxiii., Moses exhibits the yearnings of a soul after a *full* manifestation of God. The moral ruin of man, that is of Israel, was at that moment under his eye. But before that moment, he had been a witness of the glory of God at the foot of the fiery hill, where the law was delivered. And he had likewise been with the elders of Israel in the presence of the God of Israel, on the hill, after the sending of the national or conditional covenant (chaps. xx. and xxiv.) But he now craved more. Neither of these manifestations of God gave God to him in such a character as suited sinners, or that condition of ruin which now formed the scene before him. The fiery hill presented God as the righteous exacter of righteousness. The hill of the presence of Jehovah, where the Lord of Israel was in His majesty, presented God as in the terms and bonds of a conditional covenant with His people. But such things would not do for Moses now. The breach of the law, the sin of Israel, made other things needful—but such things he blessedly believed were to be found in God, and that neither the foot of the fiery hill, nor the top of the mount itself, had given him *all* that God was. God, he knew, was not yet fully manifested, because the sinner was not yet fully relieved. Blessed this impression on the spirit of Moses was! Therefore, "Shew me thy glory," was now his cry. Man, in his ruins, was before him, and God in His full glory must be before him also.

There was something truly beautiful and excellent in this. Moses apprehended that there must be more in

God than he had yet reached, because as yet the revelation of Him had not suited itself to man as a sinner, in moral ruin. And the Lord answers this yearning of the soul; for "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." He passes by in his full glory. "All His goodness" passes by; and He satisfies Moses, though Moses still looks on man as ruined, or Israel as a stiff-necked people (see chap. xxxiv. 9). He asks for no further manifestation. God in *full* glory, God in all that He is, was what he needed in behalf of his self-ruined people; and having got that, all that he craved now, was the presence and company of the Blessed One, whom he had now seen and heard.

And, indeed, it is blessed to add, that in *this* manifestation of God, man is hid. The people were all present, at the giving of the law, in chap. xx. The elders were on the mount, in the divine presence, occupying their place there as truly and as really as the God of Israel occupied His place, during the great transaction of chap. xxiv., for Israel was a necessary party to the conditional covenant. But now, in chap. xxxiii., the people are not present, none but Moses, and he is hid, and God alone is manifested and declared; and Moses has but to look and to listen, forth from the cleft rock, where like sovereign grace had assigned him and provided him a place.

Surely, this was a blessed moment in Old Testament times. Moses craved and got, in spirit, what the Son of the bosom, the Word made flesh, who is the light of life, has now brought to us sinners, in our place of guilt and ruin. With this difference, however. Moses sought this manifestation, the Son has brought it unsought. Moses got it as for himself, the Son has given it, that sinners, as sinners, whosoever will, may walk in the light of it.

And happy still to add, that as Moses found this manifestation of God to be enough for him, so do all those in John's gospel, who come to Jesus, find Him enough for them. Their joy and liberty are secured. Andrew and Philip and Nathanael, and the Samaritan, and the convicted sinner, and the blind beggar, one and all, equally and fully prove this.

“O house of Israel, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

The day broke upon Jacob himself at Peniel; and then his path lay over a plain illuminated and gladdened by the face of God. It was a little heaven to him, a brighter, fairer heaven, than when at Bethel he saw the angels ascending and descending on the ladder. The halting of his thigh was not cared for, by reason of the face of God. A man may surely be content to walk lamely, if his path be across Peniel.

And let me add, in John's gospel, ruined man is not so much *exposed* as *taken up*. A full and perfect state of moral ruin is rather assumed than proved; and God comes, in the Son, to act in healing light. This is rather what we get there. We see one sinner after another walking in the light, after this healing manifestation of God has visited him. It is not Andrew and Philip and Nathanael, as they had been in the flesh, but Andrew and Philip and Nathanael, in the life-giving light of Jesus. Flesh is not exposed, so much as renewed man, free and happy, is presented—man freshly called into that knowledge of God which is life eternal, and walking in the light, as man new-made.

LUKE XV. 8—10.

“Count not (vain thought!) upon a lost piece of silver seeking its owner. And count not diligence and the use of the broom to be enough without a light also. Not only do night and dusty floors make candle-light expedient, but by its means a watchful eye can see the light as it is reflected from *a piece of lost silver*.”

N^o. XX.

1 PETER ii. 24.

THE true force of 1 Peter ii. 24, has been called in question by those who seek not only to make Christ's life vicarious, but His sufferings, during the time of His active service, penal. The thought that all the sufferings of that Blessed One have infinite value, and that they were all for us, every Christian heart would close in with adoringly. There may be obscurity of mind connected with it; but the heart is right. But when intellectual proofs are attempted to be given to sustain unsound doctrine on this point, so as to undermine the true character and value of atonement, and to cast a cloud on divine righteousness, it is desirable, then, to maintain the truth. I do not hesitate to say that those who speak of the appropriation of Christ's living righteousness to us for righteousness, and hold the sufferings of His active service, to have been penal and vicarious, have, in no case, a full, clear, and Scriptural gospel. I am sure many who, from the teaching they have had, hold it, are as far as my own heart could desire from the wish to weaken the truth of atonement and the value of Christ's blood-shedding, without which there is no remission. They have not seen the deep evil lying at the root of a doctrine which speaks of vicarious sufferings, and bearing of sins to which no remission is attached. I am quite ready to believe that the most violent accusers of the doctrine which looks to the sufferings of Christ upon the cross as the alone atonement and propitiation for sin do not wish to enfeeble its value. But we may enquire into the justness of all views which we do not judge to be scriptural, and press too with confidence what we find in scripture. I do not believe in the penal and vicarious character of Christ's sufferings during His active service,

nor do I believe in the appropriation of His legal righteousness to me as failing in legal righteousness myself. I am satisfied that those who hold it have not a full, true, scriptural gospel; by some it is used for the maintenance of what is horribly derogatory to Christ. I have known many valued and beloved saints who hold that Christ, under the law, satisfied by His active fulfilment of it for our daily failure under it. I believe it to be a very serious mistake, though I may value them as His beloved people still. I believe in His obedience to the law — I believe that all His moral perfectness, completed in death, was available to me as that in which He was personally agreeable to God, and a lamb without spot and blemish. But these are *not the* appropriation to me of legal righteousness. But I am not now purposing to go over all this ground; I merely maintain the ground on which I stand, and the doctrine which I hold as scriptural, and as of immense importance to the church just now. I would do it meekly, patiently, that souls may be delivered from error and bondage into the liberty of the truth of God, which is the only real power of godliness; but I would do it firmly and constantly. In the attempt to maintain the doctrine of Christ's bearing sins all His life, the translation of the text I refer to has been called in question. I am satisfied that it is perfectly correct. As an element in this question, I would now examine it. The English version is, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body, on the tree." A simple person would, surely, in reading Peter, refer to His sufferings in death. Thus, in chap. iii., I read: "For Christ hath, also, once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." No one denies that Christ suffered, during His life, sufferings which found their perfection in His death, besides the wrath-bearing character of it; for He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But the question is, "Was there sin-bearing during His active service, or was He kept up as the Lamb to bear sin?" It turns on the word "bare" *ανενευκε*. It is alleged that if it meant "bare," it must be *υπενευκε* or *εβαστασε* or *ελαβε*. All this is a

mistake. A sacrificial word is, I do not doubt, purposely used, but ἀναφέρω means "to bear, or undergo," probably because sacrificial victims, which were offered up, were supposed to bear sins; at any rate, it does mean "to bear, undergo, sustain." The truth is, determining the meaning of a word by etymology, in a cultivated language, is the most absurd thing possible. It is interesting as philological research, but as determining the *usus loquendi*, it is ridiculous. I might say "hell fire" must mean "covering sins"; for it is the same word as "to heal," used also provincially for *roofing*; for the same reason, hence, that the fire of hell was purgatorial or remissory. It did originally mean a covered place, *hades*, and hence, gradually, everlasting punishment. *Αναφέρω*, does mean to offer in sacrifice; it means "to recreate oneself, to remember, to cough up, to return, to cast the sin on another, to weigh or consider," etc. The question is, does it mean to bear, to undergo the pain and burden of, and, when used sacrificially, can it be separated from the altar of sacrifice. I say it does mean "to bear, undergo the pain and burden of anything"; and when used in connection with sacrifice, cannot be separated from actual *offering up to God*. First, that it means "to bear or undergo." I must turn to the dictionaries for this, and the passages in which it is used. They leave no sort of question. It is only systematising, and not the facts in the Greek language, which can lead any one to deny it. I turn to Stephanus. I find *αναφέρειν, ferre, perferre, pati, ut Christus dicitur, ἀνεγκειν peccata nostra* (1 Pet. ii. 24; Heb. ix. 21). *Cit. e, Thucydides ἀναφέρειν κινδύνους, quod durum sit reddere ferre pericula potiusque verti debeat subire pericula*; better "to undergo," that is, than "to bear"; the general sense of "undergoing the burden and pain of," is evident; and that is our point here. There is a reference in the beginning of the article to Aristides; I suppose, Ælius Aristides, the rhetorician, which I cannot verify. So Pape *auf sich nehmen, ertragen*, "to take on oneself," "to bear," *κινδύνους*, Thucydides. *Φθόνους και διαβολους, πολεμον*, that is, "envy, calumny, war," Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. He adds, New Testament. Liddel and Scott give "to uphold, to take on one,

Latin *sustinere*; quoting Æschylus (*αχθον*) and Thucydides. It is thus perfectly certain that the word means "to bear the burden of anything, to undergo." The etymological sense of "to bring up or back" is a mere absurdity here.

We have now to examine the scriptural use of it in connection with sacrifice, and in particular the passage in Peter. Ανενευκε, is a sacrificial word. It is used here, if we are to take it as it usually is taken, as referring to Isaiah liii. 12, for *nasa*, נשׂא, which means "to lift up, to bear, to forgive," and here confessedly "to bear." It is alleged—for I have considered diligently what is alleged against it—that it cannot mean "to bear passively with" (λυ) as would be the case with *ανενευκε επι το*. This is a mistake: Aaron was to bear the names of the children upon (λυ), his heart (Ex. xxviii. 29). So with the judgment, in ver. 30. It is said that Isaiah liii. 4, is translated ελαβε, by divine inspiration, and hence it could not be *ανενευκε*, in ver. 12. But this proves, if anything (for the word may be translated differently in different places according to the sense, but if it be the Spirit's purpose to make the difference here it proves this,) that he would *not use a sacrificial vicarious word in ver. 4, but would in ver. 12; that is, that the "bearing," in ver. 4, was not sacrificial, but is in ver. 12; for Heb. ix. 28, that Christ was once offered εις το πολλων ανενευκειν αμαρτιας, are the very words of Is. liii. 12.* So that if this is of any value, we have *not an inference* that it cannot be used in one place because it is not in another; and that Peter, if he had quoted it, *would* have used another word for "*nasa*" in ver. 12, because Matthew did in ver. 4 (an argument, when said to be from inspiration, which I decline characterising), but a *direct proof* that inspiration will not use a vicarious sacrificial word as to Christ's living sympathies and sorrows; but that it will, and does, use it when it speaks of bearing sins when offered up to God. And now, leaving argument, which I am glad to do, what is the scriptural use of *αναφερω*, in connection with sins and sacrifices, with or without *επι το*? The following instances will shew: Num. xiv. 34, *και ανοισουσι την πορνειαν υμων.* The use of it in this passage is the more noticeable, because, save in Lev. xx. 19,

the word always used for bearing the consequence of our own, or a father's, sin (and under the old covenant, this is the same thing) is λαμβανω, in the Sept. In Lev. xx. 19, it is αφοισουσι. In Exodus xxviii. 29, it is ληψεται τα ανοματα επι το λογιον; and for the same words in ver. 30, it is και οισει τας κρισεις επι του. Indeed, the argument as to λαμβανω, may justly be carried much farther, for λαμβανω is regularly used for bearing the fruit of one's sin, bringing sin on oneself in its consequences. It is not bearing it vicariously, but as a consequence on oneself. The only apparent exceptions that I am aware of, and they are only apparent, are Lev. xvi. 22, the scapegoat; and Ezekiel iv. 4, 5, 6; but the first is ληψεται εις γην αβατον, "He shall carry them into a land not inhabited," and in the case of Ezekiel, it was clearly not (נשנ) vicarious, but representative (סבל) and the same as the ordinary case. In a word, αμαρτιαν λαμβανειν, is not used for vicarious bearing, but bearing the consequence of one's own fault, coming under the effect of it oneself, pœnas luere. But what is important, is to see the actual use of αναφερω, when used with sacrifice. Numbers xiv. 34, and Isaiah liii. 11, are plain proofs that it is used for bearing sins penally. But now, as to sacrifice. The reader must bear in mind that the act of having the sin on the victim is not in itself the expiation. That puts the victim in the answering place. For the other, death and the judicial action of God must come in to put it away. It must be slain and offered on the altar. As it is said, "by means of death." Christ had to take our sins on Him, and therefore die; give His life a ransom for many. Every one, therefore, believes He had taken them on Him before He gave up the ghost. The question is, did He take them on Him in order to suffer on the cross, and suffer the penal judgment of them there, as the victim was brought up to the altar, then the sins confessed on His head, and then the victim itself, thus made sin, slain, and burnt? Or was Christ born into this penal state, suffering it before He actually gave Himself up to be offered on the cross? Was He under the penal consequences of sin in the sufferings of His active service, was that penally from God; or in the suf-

ferings of the cup He took to drink upon the cross from God? I believe the latter, that it was after the victim was presented as an offering to the altar—in Christ's case we must say presented Himself as a spotless victim to the cross—that the penal sufferings for sin were on Him, because our sins were on Him, and that it is to this bearing of sins alone that the passage in Peter applies. Christ offered Himself without spot to God. Jehovah laid, then, the iniquity upon Him. He who knew no sin was then made sin. Did the Lord lay the iniquity upon Him before He offered Himself without spot, a proved spotless lamb? One who knew no sin was made sin when He had bowed to His Father's will to drink that cup.

Offering has, in scripture, a double character. It is used for presenting the victim, or indeed any offering, *הביא, הקריב, heevi or hikriv*, "to cause to come nigh"; but *αναφέρω επι το*, is not used for this, though in grammar, I know not why it should not be. It is for hard causes in judgment in Deut. i. 17, *ανοισετε αυτα επ' εμε*, "You shall bring them to me." But not for offering that I can find. If the reader take the first chapter of Leviticus, he will find for these words *προσφέρειν* or *προσαγειν*, to bring up. This was the presenting the offering which was to be a victim. But as soon as the victim, or part of it, is spoken of as burnt on the altar (Lev. iii. 5), then it is *ανοισουσιν αυτα επι το θυσιαστηριον*, so in ver. 9, the general idea of offering is *προσοιουσιν, hikriv*, and in ver. 11, the burning of it on the altar, *ανοισουσιν επι το*. And this is the regular use of it in Leviticus, and elsewhere, as Exodus xxix. 18, 25; xxx. 20; Lev. ii. 16; iii. 16; iv. 10, 20, 26, 31; vi. 15, 35; vii. 21; viii. 16, 19, 20, 27; ix. 10, 20; xvi. 25; xvii. 6; Num. v. 26; xviii. 17. This last has the same force, but there is not *επι το θυσιαστηριον*. That is *αναφέρω επι το*, is the technical expression for consumption or offering up to God by fire, when on the altar, in contrast with bringing up to the altar. When *επι το* is not used, it has practically the same force when used of offerings—that is, offering to God; but *αναφέρειν επι το* has the proper peculiar force of bearing them as a victim on the altar,

under the consuming fire of God, not of bringing up to it. It answers to *hiktir*, not to *hikriv*. It is impossible that the use of language can be made plainer by the facts of that use. There is another word for which it is used, which confirms this, *הָלַח*, *hala* (Gen. viii. 20; xxii. 2; so Exod. xxiv. 5; Lev. xiv. 19, 20), where the reader will remark, comparing ver. 13, that in both cases of the sin or trespass-offering and the burnt-offering, they are killed before they are offered in this sense of the word. In Christ both went together, He died on the cross; but it is of importance to remark it here, because it shews that *hala* as well as *hiktir* is not bearing the sins up to the altar, but the being offered (in consuming fire) on the altar to God. The word is used in some passages generally as a burnt-offering, an offering made by fire, the sense being assumed to be known; but this shews the strict sense is, the ascending up to God as a sweet savour under the proving and consuming fire — *not* the bringing up sin to the altar. And this is so true, that as these burnt-offerings were of a sweet savour, so no offering not made by fire was a sweet savour. Compare Lev. ii. 9 and 12, determining the use of this word in the most positive way they were to bring it up (*takriv*) as an offering, but they were not to offer it (*yahala*) as a sweet savour, very justly as to the sense translated “burnt” in the English. It was not to be made to ascend as a sweet savour, that is, to be burnt and mount up to God as such. The general use may be seen in Num. xxviii. 2; Deut. xii. 13, 14; xxvii. 6, is a proof that the notion of *ἐπι το*, i.e. *ἐπι*, with an accusative (see below) is not so absolute, but proves that *ανοισει*, in any case, does not mean necessarily bringing up to, for here it is used with the genitive. Judges xiii. 19, again shews distinctly what *αναφερω επι το* means (here *ἐπι την*, because it was a rock), for it is added, “For it came to pass, that when the flame went up,” *behaaloth*, “from off” the altar. The victim was offered on the rock, and in the going up of the flame. That is what *hala* refers to, not the bringing up to the altar. Additional cases will be found in Kings and Chronicles, David’s and Solomon’s offerings; but it is only repeating similar cases,

which confirm, but are not needed, to prove the point. The words for which *αναφερειν επι το θυσιαστηριον* are used, namely, burning, or causing to ascend on, the altar, and the uniform use of them prove distinctly that the force of the word is the bearing under consuming fire on the altar, and not bringing sins up to it. I may quote another proof, strongly confirming the use of this word in 2 Chron. xxix. 27. Verse 24, the victim was killed; ver. 27, Hezekiah commands it to be offered *ανενεγκειν επι το θυσιαστηριον*. I add, on this occasion, it is never used for bringing or bearing sins up to the altar. It is used for bringing victims to the house; but this I quote because there it is not *επι*. The sins were not yet upon them, they were the spotless victims that were to become sin-bearers, and sweet savours of offerings made by fire, *Αναφερειν επι το θυσιαστηριον* is never used for bringing or bearing sins up to the altar; what it is used for has been fully shewn. But the supposition that *επι*, with an accusative, means actively bringing up to and then rest is a mistake. There may be grammatically the idea by implication that that which is *επι το* is not always and naturally there; but as a matter of fact, it does mean resting on a place or thing at the time spoken of. Thus Matt. xiii. 2, "All the multitude stood," *επι τον αιγιαλον*. So Matt. xiv. 28, "Ye shall sit on twelve thrones," *επι δωδεκα θρονους*. Acts x. 17; xi. 11, *επεστησον επι τον πυλωνα επι την οικιαν*. Winer's Grammatik (section 583) may be seen for this use and the use of *επι*, with a genitive for *motion*. See a singular example in Lev. iii. 5, the pieces of the peace-offering on the burnt-offering, *επι τα*; on the wood, *επι τα*; on the fire, *επι του*: this may be from the fire being always there belonging to the altar, whereas the wood was brought there: *ουσιν* will be understood then before it. In many cases, I have no doubt that the real cause of the accusative is this; when the preposition of the compound verb implies motion, there will be the accusative, though the whole sense will be *rest*. I do not think you would ever have *ειναι επι το* with *εφιστημι αναφερω* you will have the accusative; so *ειστηκε επι το*, in contrast with Christ's sitting in a boat on the sea; but Mark, *ησαν επι γης*. But this is gram-

mar, and I pursue it no farther. It remains only to adduce the cases of *αναφέρειν*, in the sense of bearing or offering. We have first Heb. vii. 27, "who needeth not daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice; for this he did once when he offered up himself." Now, here it is perfectly certain that it has nothing to do with the victim bearing sins up to the altar, but with what we have seen to be its usual and uniform sense, the *High Priest's* offering it on the altar, where it was a victim — so, also, we have distinct proof that it is no vicarious life, for He did it once when He offered up Himself, and it was for sins. When, consequently, it may have a more general meaning of giving Himself up to be a victim, we have the word used for that in Leviticus, *προσφέρω*, Heb. ix. 16. Hence we have in ver. 28, "once offered (*προσενεχθεις*), to bear (*αναφέρειν*) the sins of many." Thus He was *once* offered, and offered to bear sins as thus offered, of which it is said that He had not to offer Himself often, for then He must often have suffered; but now He has appeared once in the consummation of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself — that is, His offering, His suffering, was the sacrifice of Himself. His being born was not His sacrifice. He offered Himself, one who was a man, though by the Eternal Spirit, or there could be no offering; that is, He was a man before He offered Himself, His own blessed voluntary act, the perfect act of Christ, though in obedience, and Himself already the spotless lamb. He was thus the man, the spotless one, offered to bear the sins of many. This, there can be no doubt, refers to Isaiah liii. 12.

We have, further, James ii. 21, "When he had offered up Isaac on the altar"; and 1 Peter ii. 5, "Offer up spiritual sacrifices," which give no *proof*, save that the last shews this, that it was the offering up *to God*, which is very important in this way, that it shews it was not the bringing up the sins when laid on the victim's head to the altar. The offering of the victim to God is *προσφέρω*, the consumption on the altar was its offering up as a sacrifice to God, this is *αναφέρω*. The notion of bringing up a living victim to the altar is unknown to scripture; the animal was slain when he had been offered

(προσευχεθεις), slain by whom it might be, and the blood sprinkled on the altar, and the fat, or the whole victim burnt; the altar had to do with death and the judgment of fire, and there was the sacrifice — a living victim bringing up sins to the altar, is a thought *foreign to and contrary to Scripture*, when the victim had been presented, and the hands of the offerer had been laid upon it, it was slain at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Death was the way sin was dealt with in the victim (we know Christ's death was on the cross, as well as the full drinking of the cup of wrath) the thought of bringing sins up livingly, as if He offered Himself and His sins, is an impossibility. No; He offered Himself, and bare (ανεβεγκε) our sins, when offered (προσευχεθεις), as a dying victim. Death was the wages of sin. Thus I return to 1 Peter ii. 24, with the full evidence of scripture and the Greek use of the word. All the scripture order of sacrifice, and the language of scripture, confirming it, that the simple-hearted reader may rest in all confidence in his English translation, "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." The word "bare" has a sacrificial character; but *that* no Christian reader ever doubted in this passage.

I do not see, I confess, how any scriptural locution could be made more certain. I doubt that any other could have so ample and absolute a proof of its actual meaning; and refutation of the meaning attempted to be put upon it, and the desired change in the authorised version.

"Who [Christ] did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Peter ii. 22—24).

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dual unity, should be called that which He was saying, 'Thou art Peter,'" etc. — "that the building of the eternal temple by a wonderful gift of the grace of God should stand in the solidity of Peter, strengthening His Church by this firmness, that neither human rashness might reach it, nor the gates of hell prevail against it."

Here I close my note. The place given to Peter speaks for itself to every Christian. As to doctrinal claim, it would be needless to pursue the Papacy any further. With its political influence I have here nothing to do: I have sufficiently given its history already.

A most interesting but difficult subject of research in connection with this sketch would be—How far the workings of divine light and conscience were connected with some of the heretical movements of different ages, even though the craft of Satan may have marred and corrupted the movement of these unguarded souls. And this interest would apply to various sects, so-called, which arose from the sixth century onward, at least as much as to earlier heretical bodies. But the facts are very difficult to estimate, and even to ascertain, and the greatest part of the testimony to be sifted as coming from enemies. Take, for example, as obvious instances. Tertullian and the Paulicians.

 EXTRACT.

"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. xxii. 10—15).

N^o. XXII.

WHAT IS OUR POSITION AS CHRISTIANS?
 AND WHAT OUGHT TO BE OUR PRAYER
 IN RELATION TO THE HOLY GHOST?

IT is of the utmost moment to all the people of God to ascertain * * * whether the Holy Ghost has returned to heaven since Pentecost, and has to be sent again on every fresh occasion of blessing, or whether He remained, and still remains on earth with us, since that great event. And such is the important subject now under our consideration.

More than eighteen hundred years ago, a small company of the disciples of Jesus were accustomed to meet in an upper chamber for prayer and supplication, in expectation of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, according to the promise of their blessed Master, to be shortly accomplished (Acts i). They were feeble and fearful (John xx. 19, 20), and quite unenlightened as to the purposes and counsels of God respecting the calling of the Gentiles and the Church, having still, for the most part, Jewish views and feelings (Acts i. 6), with prejudices, which nothing but the action and direct authority of the Spirit of God afterwards sufficed to overcome (Acts x. 45—47, xi. 15—18). Besides this they had no power to preach or declare the Word of God, and were specially directed by the Lord Himself to wait until this was conferred on them, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 4, 5, 8); nor could they, until that event took place, be formed into one body, the Church (1 Cor. xii. 13), and its order, organisation, and privileges, were unknown to them.

This state of things continued until the descent of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, which is thus described:—“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And

suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts ii). Thus was fulfilled the promise of Christ, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever (John xiv. 16.)

The terms of this promise were that the Comforter should *come* to abide with them, in accordance with which we see, on the day of Pentecost, not only the "cloven tongues as of fire," resting upon each individual, emblematical of the gifts and powers which the Holy Ghost conferred, but His own personal presence in their midst, indicated by the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, which, coming from heaven, "*filled all the house where they were sitting.*" Thus was the advent and presence of this Divine and Almighty Agent announced to them all, in an unmistakeable way. Thus they knew that though the Son had returned to heaven, another Divine person of the blessed Trinity had descended to earth to remain with them, according to the promise of Christ, for ever.

His presence changed the aspect of everything. Courage and confidence succeeded to fear; weakness was exchanged for power; and boldness in public testimony for Christ for what had before been only in private; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. Besides which, the Church is now first spoken of as an existent body that could be added to (v. 47), the unity and love which characterised its members becoming conspicuous to all (44—46) whilst those who were enrolled, exhibited the living agency of the divine Spirit of truth in continuing stedfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers; four all-important things, which shew distinct and instructed organisation and spiritual power.

We have, in addition, the conversions which took place under the ministry of the Word by the Apostle Peter, on one day three thousand being brought in

(Acts ii. 41), and on another two thousand, after the healing of the impotent man (Acts iv. 4). But these conversions were not the out-pouring of the Spirit which had been previously exhibited in the apparent form as of a rushing mighty wind, and of tongues of fire which rested on the believers; but they were the blessed effects of the Holy Spirit's presence, making itself felt, subsequently, upon the hearts of sinners.^a These things ought not to be confused; the former was the coming or descent of the Holy Ghost, the latter is only one result of it, though a very blessed one. He comes to the disciples to dwell among them, and shew His power. He acts when present in the Church, on the world *outside*, and that by means of a testimony given by the lips of the apostles who were filled with the Holy Ghost.

In Acts iv. a scene presents itself of great importance in our present inquiry. An attempt is made by the leading authorities of the Jewish nation, to put a stop to this work of God, by threatening the apostles, and commanding them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus. This leads to prayer—prayer to God to carry on His work, to convert, and save, and bless, in the very way which Christians now desire to see it effected. It seems like the first great prayer-meeting of which we have any account, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, though held without any previous concert. But for what do they ask? not that the Holy Ghost may come,

^a Hence the Apostle Peter says, before any conversions had taken place, when addressing the multitudes who had come together, attracted by the report of the gift of tongues,—“Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He *hath shed forth* this which ye now see and hear.” This clearly shows that the apostle applied the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, not to the conversions that followed, but to what had now been received and enjoyed for the first time by those who had long been believers in Jesus. For he speaks of the shedding forth (the same word in the original as outpouring), as having been already accomplished, and as being manifest by the effects which they had been drawn together to witness; and it is in this sense that the word outpouring is always used in Scripture—that is, the abundant bestowment of the Holy Ghost, after the ascent of Christ, on those who were *previously* Jewish or Gentile converts.

or be sent, for they know Him to be there with them; but that boldness may be given them to speak the Word of God in face of all opposition, and that the name of Jesus may be magnified by the display of its power among men. The answer came at once. "*And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness.*"

The presence of that divine Comforter who had come at Pentecost, and filled all the house where they were sitting is now sensibly felt by the *house being shaken* where they were assembled, and they are all *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and speak the Word with boldness. With great power the apostles give testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, great grace rests on all, with unity of heart and mind, and self-renunciation for the good of others who were in need, whilst believers are added to the Lord, *multitudes, both of men and women* (v. 14) and those who bring their lie into *the presence of God the Holy Ghost, to whom* Peter declared the lie to have been told, are struck down by divine judgment. From this we may gather what our prayer should be, whether for ourselves, or for sinners around us.

If the Holy Ghost had returned to heaven, then should we indeed have to pray that He may be sent again, and that He should come down to us again; but to what a condition of weakness and desolation would the Church then be reduced! How could she then bear testimony to the world? How uphold the name of Christ, or the truth of God on earth? Without a Comforter, a divine person to sustain the people of God in the world, they would be indeed as the Lord said He would *not* leave His disciples, orphans or comfortless. But it is not so; our position is not that of the disciples when they were waiting for the Holy Ghost to come, with all the feebleness as we have seen that resulted from His not having yet been given (chap. i.) but rather that which is represented in chap. iv., and we may well take this prayer for our guidance at the present moment, and ask for the same things. That we may be filled with the

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Spirit, and speak the word of God with boldness, that grace may rest on us, that love may abound as then, and that the name of Jesus may be magnified in His being made known to many hearts that have never tasted His grace.

Blessed be God, the Holy Ghost is not gone back to heaven, that he needs be asked to come again; He dwells still in the Church, and in the heart of every believer.

That this is so, is evident from the promise of our blessed Lord, that as the result of His intercession that other Comforter should be given, who should "abide with them *for ever*." These words, "*for ever*," distinctly set aside every notion that would imply the Holy Ghost's ever leaving us. As long as the Church remains on earth, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is her companion and support and guide. He is given to lead her into all truth, and to take of the things of Christ, and shew them to her, and so to glorify Christ in the hearts of those that are His.

But besides this, in John xvi. His action on the world—the subject we are now speaking of—is thus set before us in the words of our Lord, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged." Here the coming of the Comforter is said to be the result of Jesus going on high, and He is said to be sent, not to the world, but to the disciples. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come *unto you*; but if I depart I will send Him *unto you*." But when He was come, and dwelling with the people of God, He would reprove the world of its condition in the sight of God—of sin in the rejection of Christ—of righteousness in Jesus alone who had left it and gone to the Father—and of its ultimate judgment.

Is not this what has been going on ever since Pentecost? Has it not been in consequence of the presence of

the Spirit of truth here that this divine and gracious operation has been carried on, and souls have been converted and brought to believe on Christ as their righteousness before God? It was His presence here in the Church, our Lord tells us, that was to accomplish this, and the conversion of souls which has continued, and been going on more or less ever since, is therefore owing to the continuance of that blessed presence on the earth, and His consequent acting on the souls of men.

How, then, it may be asked, are the times of revival that have occurred at different periods in the history of the Church to be accounted for?

To this the reply may be readily given from the passages we have referred to, that not only the existence of the Church itself, but all blessing that has come to the Church since Pentecost—all its guidance through the difficulties and dangers of the world, and its support against the power of Satan—all spiritual ministry (1 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 11) for the edification of the saints—all the spread of the gospel, and the maintenance of the truth of God on earth—all the testimony borne to the efficacy of the blood of Christ or the power of His name before God (John xv. 20)—all the revivals that have ever occurred—all the conversions which have taken place, whether few or many, whether suddenly or more gradually—all is due to the great fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost here on earth. Just as a reservoir in a town supplies all its different parts with water, so needful for the support of natural life, so does the Spirit of God here present maintain all the functions of spiritual life in the people of God, and afford an abundant and ever present supply for their necessities, and the wants of sinners, where there is dependance and the prayer of faith to draw it out.

Surely it ought to encourage us to know that we have this divine and blessed Person here with us as an abiding source of strength and consolation. He cannot fail in His care for the Church, and He has but to put forth His power, and the work is done. And it may well stimulate our souls to look to God, that as He has done so much for us in giving us this divine and almighty Comforter, so His power may be displayed for our blessing and the awakening of sinners.

The Holy Ghost's Presence.

All this, however, could not take place, as we know from John vii. 37—39, until Jesus was glorified. “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).”

From this we learn that the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in individual believers, and be the source of their joy in the truth, and power in witnessing for Jesus, is the result of Christ having taken His place at the right hand of God, after having glorified God by His death in the putting away of sin (John xiii. 31, 32—xvii. 4). The Spirit comes to be in the souls of believers the witness and seal of the efficacy of that blessed work which Jesus accomplished on the cross—His presence in each believer proves that sin has been blotted out by the blood of Christ—that it is now gone from us because it is gone from Him who for our sakes took it on Himself, and that we are now as clear of it in the sight of God as He is (Rom. iv. 25.—viii. 34.—Col. ii. 10). He could not have been raised again if it had not been completely and entirely put away; and His taking His place on the throne of God, is the triumphant clearance of every believer from every charge which could be laid against him, whilst it makes his acceptance as perfect as that of Christ Himself in the glory of that throne. The Spirit of God now unites him to Christ as part of His body, and therefore gives him to share in His position and privileges.—Eph. i. 6, 13, 19, 22, 23.—1 Cor. vi. 17, 19.—2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

Besides this the veil which the justice and holiness of God interposed between Himself and sinners—which hid God from man, prevented his approach to God, and hindered the outflow of divine love—has been rent by the death of Jesus. The Holy Ghost has come here to witness that that death has broken down every barrier which subsisted between God and man, and that the blood being carried into the holiest of all, the way in

there is now manifest; and the Gospel and the coming of the Holy Ghost witness that God's love suffers nothing to stand between Himself and sinners, the blood of Christ being provided for their reconciliation to Him, and the veil of the temple rent "from the top to the bottom." Compare Mark xv. 38, and Heb. ix. 8, 11, 12.—x. 19, 20. Thus the meaning of the words of Christ becomes apparent—"The Holy Spirit was not yet,"* so far as the blessing of man, and His presence with men was concerned, because that Jesus was not yet glorified; and again—"If I go not away, the Comforter *will not come unto you*, but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

This Scripture, however, shews us that this blessed Person acts as the agent of the Father and the Son, by whom He has been sent, and whose purposes of love He has undertaken to carry out; and so much is this the case, that of His communications it is said in the same passage, (v. 13) "He shall not speak of (or from) Himself, but whatsoever He shall *hear*, that shall He speak;" and "He shall glorify *Me*; for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

We have thus seen that the Scripture speaks of the presence of the Holy Ghost down here in a twofold way, as having taken up His residence in the Church collectively, and also in each individual believer; that being the second part of the promise of Christ to His disciples in John xiv.—"He shall be *in you*." This latter truth is not so much insisted on here, being more generally admitted, though the way in which His "influence" is often spoken of by Christians, makes it too evident that they but little enter into the reality of the truth that the body of the believer is "the temple of the Holy Ghost," (1 Cor. vi. 19).

It will be evident to every one how strengthening to faith and encouraging to prayer, and every other effort for the conversion of sinners, the sense of the abiding presence of the blessed Comforter must be; and how weakening, as well as erroneous is the supposition that the Holy Ghost has gone back to heaven, and has to be brought down again by prayer, whenever any fresh and

* The word "*given*" is put in by the translators.

extended blessing is desired. Nor can it be denied that the petitions which are constantly heard, for the Holy Spirit to "come," or "descend," are utterly inconsistent with the thought of His being here, and shew that those who utter them are unconscious of His presence, or they certainly would not ask for it. The same might be said for the most part, of the frequent use of the word "outpouring," of the Spirit, inasmuch as it is generally used to express all that took place at Pentecost, which was far more than the conversion of sinners, though that, as we have seen, accompanied it.

From these things also we may believe, that when Christians are assembled like the disciples of old (Acts iv.) to seek for blessing from God, and the extension of the work of God around them—in the name of Christ, and in dependence on the Spirit of God—His presence will be there to preside amongst them, and to guide them in their prayers, and shew them what to do. And if His presence is looked for as a sovereign and divine person, it will lead us to leave things in His hands, to order and direct for the common profit, and for the glory of God.—1 Cor. xii. 11.

Besides this, the conviction of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer will strengthen the soul in its supplication to God; for, says the Apostle, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And it is in our hearts that He does this, as the next verse shows. "And He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints, according to (the will of) God (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

FRAGMENT.

"As saints, we are to have understanding as well as affections. Nothing marks our low estate more than the unintelligence of our prayers."

No. XXIII.

ANSWER TO A QUESTION AS TO THE CONSISTENCY OF ABRAHAM IN ARMING HIS SERVANTS FOR THE RESCUE OF LOT.

IT has been a question which has been suggested to the writer of these lines, how it came that Abraham, whose course was in faith outside the circumstances around him, should arm his servants for the rescue of Lot? He did this also manifestly with the approval of God.

The difficulty seems to arise from ignorance of the variety in the dispensations of God, which many believing persons remain in; in whose course, therefore, there is far less clearness, than acting in faith and full knowledge would produce. They confine themselves to the question of the peace of their own souls, and are often long before they comprehend, even if ever they do, the difference of dispensations as God successively revealed them. The vacillating nature of their peace, which is a case that too often occurs, does not arise from their not being the objects of God's unfailing grace in Christ Jesus, but from practically failing by their not taking that position which accords with the grace they enjoy.

God revealed Himself in the Garden as Lord God, the Creator of an order that was "very good," with prohibition of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There was an obedience and righteousness in accordance with this revelation of God. Without resting on what was between—when Noah came out of the ark, a new order with government was established, and responsibilities in accordance with it. When the law was promulgated, there was another—when Christ came, another. What David did in regard to the subjection of the land and surrounding nations, was under God's

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eye, done on consultation with God, and in accordance with the revelation of God, as God of Israel.

Christ coming from the bosom of the Father, declaring Him and His love and grace; and with right to Jerusalem, to Judea, and the world, does not call for twelve legions of angels; but "when He was reviled, reviled not again, and committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously." He took on Himself the form of a servant, and humbled Himself even to the death of the cross, and did not resist evil, setting us an example as to conduct which had another exaltation in view.

Christ in the coming dispensation will come as David did, overcoming His enemies, and with the saints who have suffered for Him and with Him, in confession of an absent Lord, their Master, take possession of the world, of which they are heirs with Him, *because they did not contend.*

Now, the question that has arisen as to the consistency of Abraham's rescuing Lot by force of arms with the place he took outside all the circumstances of the land he lived in, will be settled on a nearer examination of the dispensation of God then existing.

What place in the dispensation of God did this act of Abraham take? As to the land of Canaan, he had not so much as a foot in it, bowed himself before the sons of Heth, and bought a burying-place according to the full price of the money of the merchant, and was under no obligation for that which he was to receive at the hand of God alone, four hundred years afterwards.

Isaac followed in the same steps. His father had dug wells, but the herdsmen of Abimelech drove his herdsmen away from two in succession, and he yielded and went on till he found "room."

Jacob, forgetting his standing and the faith of his father and of Abraham, bought land of the sons of Hamor, at Shechem, to pitch his tents in. The sad scenes of Shechem followed in reproof of his not keeping Abraham's faith. In escaping thence, he buries every idol, and goes to Bethel, the place of Abraham's *first* entrance to the land of promise, and to begin anew. Happy is it to be allowed to begin anew! We see, therefore, clearly the

dispensation of strangership in which Abraham moved in the land, and of which God had promised him possession.

The question now remains—Did Abraham act out of the order of dispensation that God placed him in, in arming his servants, and rescuing his nephew Lot by force of arms from the kings that had taken him prisoner? The faith of the Christian in the world is touched upon in this matter.

I can enjoy most exceedingly the type of the delivery of the remnant of a future day by a victorious Christ, and I find even the names of the nations leagued against Christ, in those leagued against Abraham,^a but that would not satisfy the question as to Abraham's act; but I find one clue in this transaction, that Abraham had not lost sight of his confession,—He rescued Lot, but he would not take anything of the spoils, lest it should be said that the people of the land, with whom he now stood, for it was in an attack made on them that Lot had been made prisoner, had made Abraham rich. Abraham was not guided by circumstances at all, nor did he mix himself with the circumstances of the land in which he was a stranger. He owned Melchisedek, but he was the priest of the Most High God,—the representative of Him who, as Priest and King, shall reign eventually there.

On the occurrence of Lot's captivity, who had, from his having joined the nations, lost his all, as he did finally on the destruction of Sodom, as the consequence of his settlement among them; Abraham comes forward for his deliverance (the righteous but inconsistent Lot) from the hands of the four nations *situated outside* the land of Canaan, which was the land in which, because of the dispensation and promises of God, he always remained passive (but, yet, ever cared for) in the hands of God, using neither aggression nor self-defence. He walked as a stranger outside all the circumstances of the place he was in. We are in the Canaan of this world, and it is to the faith of Abraham Scripture makes the appeal.

^a Shinar—Elam (Hellas, as given in the Septuagint) and Tidal, king of nations, or ten kingdoms with their heads.

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Christ, if I may so speak, followed, and we are called to do so by the same faith, in a place God has not yet made ours by inheritance with Christ, joint heirs with Him, as Heir of God. He shall possess the earth and reign over it, as Canaan shall under Him be given to Israel. Christ does not take present possession, nor do we contend for our rights, nor for His. It is the faith of Abraham not to do so. It only has a more extended scope. We are strangers in a place to which we are heirs. If you can find a place outside that which Christ shall possess and reign over, and you reign with Him, you may be then warranted to do as Abraham did, if you find a righteous man to be delivered.

With Abraham it was, from faith to faith, as it should be with the believer. His position led him by grace (which was revealed to him by God) to the faith of "a city not built with hands, eternal in the heavens," and thus made him (Christ being of his seed) heir of the world.

For us, we say,—

"Our home is in heaven, our home is not here ;"

not only inheritors of the kingdom, for which it is given to suffer, but having presently a heavenly portion in Christ, blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. Citizens there, strangers and as it were by accident here, where our Lord was rejected, we wait for the Son from heaven.

Now, the faith that brings me to the cross for my peace is so necessary to me, that it *seems* as easy as possible, for it is of grace. It could not be but alone of God and in God, and outside of me, to bring me to God; and in the Son I have settled peace and life, and a new calling, a heavenly one, and an earthly one by the confession I have to make.

Peace and life and our heavenly place are all so manifestly of grace (though all is of grace—and take care that we hold it thus, that we faint not), and possession so fully assured in the Son, that

"On earth the song begins,"

and faith says, with Miriam, "He hath brought us into His holy habitation," though the wilderness is before us.

Now, there are difficulties and trials in passing through the wilderness, and contests when once we taste what the land is; and opposition and enmity the farther we advance. But what are such contests? The contests are such as the righteous and holy Jesus, confessing His Father, had; they are not three hundred armed servants.

The rule is all the reverse—"He that taketh the sword, shall perish by the sword"; he that clotheth himself with the world, perisheth by the world. Here is the PATIENCE AND FAITH of the saints.

On a late occasion, a brother eloquent in the Scriptures said, that it was a mystery to him that the saints did not suffer—in fact, that they were not persecuted. The answer given was, that it was no mystery at all. As long as they profess but their heavenly privileges, the world can wish them joy in contempt of them. It can say, "Go up; we will stay below." But the word makes known to the saints the earthly confession, acknowledgment, and duty to the Lord, an exclusive Master, to whom all things of right belong. He came to make the claim, and was driven out; but the time shall come, that every knee shall bow in heaven and in earth and in hell—compulsively in the case of the rebels, but with joy to those that glory in the Lord; but all, without exception, shall confess Him to be LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

By grace and mercy we are called to the peace that is by Jesus Christ, and admitted *now* as to a secret which the world has not, and which distinguishes it as the world, viz., to the knowledge of His claim, and acknowledge Him as LORD. And right needful it is; for it is written, "Whosoever shall confess Jesus—LORD, and shall believe in his heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, shall be saved." Confess with his mouth Jesus—*Lord* (for so it is). Here begins the opposition from the world. It will not be an opposition to our behaving righteously, soberly, and justly in an evil age; who shall harm you on that account? but owning openly *another* LORD than him the world have as lord (and not only as

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respects worship). One Jesus, not King,^b which was either Jewish or a perverted intelligence, but LORD, to the glory of God the Father. It is a question between the world and the saints as to their course and confession, and the great question between God and the world. Though in heavenly relationship by grace, I am on earth; in heaven it is not dangerous to own Him—LORD. All acclaim Him as such. On earth it is dangerous, because the world is lying in the power of the wicked one, who is the rival of the LORD, and will remain so till destroyed by Him when He comes. In hell! Hell without distinction gives its allegiance to Satan.

Christ is as much to me LORD, as if I were already partaker of the inheritance. Thence the reward of it, because I own Him where disowned, and I receive reward for works and duties when in them I am serving Him. Let us keep to the text of the word and to the thoughts of the Rejected One: He that followeth me shall be where I am — he that serveth me, him shall my Father honour. If we keep to the text of the word, to the obedient ear, questioning will cease. To be partakers of heaven, or of the glory that shall be revealed, equally point out the path in which Jesus walked perfectly, and Abraham walked, so as to be an example outside the circumstances and outside the principles in which the world and the nations walk, even if some of the ordinary circumstances of life seem similar.

As Abraham rescuing Lot, and the consistency of this act is what was first the occasion of these remarks, and nothing may stand in the way of his being a very special example of the course of faith, I will conclude with a few words from Rom. xii. 12, where he is called — “The father of circumcision [spiritually] to them also who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised.” The God of glory had appeared to Abraham, and taken him from his home, his kindred, and his father's house, to take up an entirely new set of

^b That this was taken so is evident, through the misapprehension of the great claim of Christ (Acts xvii. 7).

circumstances, and to place his relationships under God, which they had not been.

The Lord of glory has appeared to us. All that men bargain for in this world, and according to this world, is because they disown Christ as the Lord of glory. "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

EXTRACTS.

"THERE are still Christians who believe that God in supreme love became a man, and so died for them in love:—that the first of duties, the truest affection—without which all others are *vile*—is to appreciate Him who did it as we ought; that the first of all obligations is to the Saviour; and that to slight that, and to attempt to sustain love in despite of that, is the *chiefest* wickedness and the worst of all dispositions. We owe something to Christ; and if He be dishonoured and slighted, I may seek to win, but I cannot be the loving companion of one who has denied my Lord deliberately. 'To me to live is Christ.' To own Him and dishonour Him, is worse than heathenism; it is to own and acquiesce in His dishonour when I know better. The man who believes Christ to be God, and is the professed Christian companion of him who denies it, is worse than the latter. We may all, alas! be deceived, but he who knows the truth, and accepts what he knows to be true of Christ, is deliberately preferring ease and companionship with Him, though he may dignify it with the name of love. Every effort to recover is right; *but a step in acquiescence* is a step in disloyalty to One, whom no one would have *dared* to dishonour if He had not come down in love.

"Christ, not opinion, is the centre of union; but I never meant, nor do I mean, that a true Christ and a false one were equally good as a centre, provided people are amiable one with another; for that means that union is man's amiability and the denial of Christ. What do I want of union, if it be not union in Christ, according to the power of life, through the Holy Ghost.

"The business of those united is *Christ's glory*. If Christians ever unite on a condition of that not being essential, their union is not Christian union at all. I have no reason for union but Christ, the living Saviour. I do not want any union but that which makes Him the centre, and the all and the hope of it. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;' but to make that a plea of indifference to Christ's personal glory in order to be one with him, who, calling himself a brother, denies and undermines it, is, in my mind, wickedness."

N^o. XXIV.

H E B R E W S .

THE important nature of the Epistle to the Hebrews demands that we should examine it with peculiar care. It has its own very distinct place. It is not the presentation of Christian position in itself, viewed as the fruit of sovereign grace, and of the work and the resurrection of Christ, or as the result of the union of Christians with Christ, the members of the body with the Head; a union which gives them the enjoyment of every privilege in Him. It is an epistle in which one who has apprehended the whole scope of Christianity, considered as placing the Christian in Christ before God, whether individually or as a member of the body, looks, nevertheless, at the Lord from here below; and presents His person, and His offices as between us and God, in Heaven, for the purpose of detaching us (as walking on earth), from all that would attach us, in a religious way, to the earth; even when—as was the case among the Jews—the bond had been ordained by God Himself.

This epistle shows us Christ in Heaven; and, consequently, that our religious bonds with God are heavenly, although we are not yet personally in Heaven ourselves. Every bond with the earth is broken, even while we are walking on the earth.

These instructions, naturally, are given in an epistle addressed to the Jews, because their religious relationships had been earthly, and at the same time solemnly appointed by God Himself. The heathen, as to their religions, had no formal relationships except with demons.

In the case of the Jews, this rupture with the earth was, in its nature, so much the more solemn, the more absolute and conclusive, from the relationship having

the Church is not mentioned here. It is well to notice the language. The character of His second coming is the subject. He has been *manifested* once. Now He is *seen* by those who look for Him. The expression may apply to the deliverance of the Jews who wait for Him in the last days. He will appear for their deliverance. But we expect the Lord for this deliverance, and we shall see Him when He accomplishes it even for us. The apostle does not touch the question of the difference between this and our being caught up—and does not use the word which serves to announce His public manifestation. He will appear to those that expect Him: He is not seen by all the world, nor is it, consequently, the judgment, although that may follow. The Holy Ghost speaks only of them that look for the Lord. To them He will appear. By them He will be seen, and it will be the time of their deliverance. So that it is true for us, and also applicable to the Jewish remnant in the last days.

Thus the Christian position, and the hope of the world to come, founded on the blood and on the Mediator of the new Covenant, are both given here. The one is the present portion of the believer, the other is secured as the hope of Israel.

(*To be continued.*)

FRAGMENT.

“And now his chequered and eventful course is past; but all before him is clear as crystal, and calm as the sea of glass.

“How triumphant the grace that has borne with, forgiven, restrained, and restored, during all] that long journey in the waste wilderness.”

“Blessed was the composure with which he looked death in the face as a foe long since triumphed over; behind whom, too, all was bright and glorious.”

I thought of the words:—

“There, no stranger, God shall greet thee;
Stranger thou in courts above!
He who to His rest shall greet thee,
Greets thee with a *well-known love*.”

J. C.

N^o. XXV.

NOTES ON EPHESIANS vi. 10—20.

“FINALLY, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”^a Marvellous things had the Apostle Paul been opening up in his epistle to his beloved Ephesians. Rich things in divine counsels (chap. i.); marvellous ways in which those counsels were made good to men upon earth (chap. ii.); wonders that had never been shown till then about the Son of God, and the mystery (chap. iii.); blessed and precious truths about the Church as to that which is true of it in itself,—as to the walk that became it,—as to the way that, even in its earthly relationship here below, it had blessed connections with Him that is in heaven (chap. iv.—vi.);—but all this leads on to an end, to a *present* end—to a *finally*, as here given to us. And this “finally” is, I think, *the* present end of the revelation to us of all those counsels,

^a The expression, “the power of His might,” is a peculiar one. It occurs elsewhere—(chap. i., ver. 19), and is there rendered “His mighty power.” We may remark that “the power of His might,” as applied to the resurrection and glorification of the Son of Man (chap. i. ver. 19) is not used with the thought of marking *His resurrection* as a wonder; as though it were a great thing for God to raise any dead—or as though the rising of Him in particular, was not to have been looked for. Just the contrary is true: He alone *must* have risen from the dead (Acts ii. 24—27); and the wonderfulness of His resurrection is rather in what it declares as to His personal glory (Rom. i. 4) and its attendant effects, (compare Mat. xxvii. 53; 1 Cor. xv. 12—18; Col. ii. 15, &c.) It was a marvellous, a wondrous power, and a new and most blessed acting of Almighty power, that which raised Him from the dead as the One that had life, eternal life FOR US in Him. This was a new position, a new glory displayed. There are three points at which this working is to be seen. First, as it was displayed in Him—the Lord of all—the fountain of eternal life; secondly, as it is displayed when making good its entry into us (as in chap. ii.); and, thirdly, as practically working in us when thus saved.

ways, wonders, blessings, and privileges which have been spoken of before.

“*Be strong in the Lord.*” The doctrine of “the Lord,” as here introduced, leads us naturally back to the first chapter. There we read how the God of our Lord Jesus Christ set Him at His own right hand in the 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 hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. That is, as I judge, it is the person of the Lord rather than His lordship to which we are turned. The person of the Lord Himself and our association with it—rather than the sphere in which His title of Lordship is now, or at any time hereafter, owned and enforced. The reference does not lead me then so much to the doctrine of *the Lordship* of Jesus as to that of the mystery of the Lord Jesus as Head of the body which is the church.

He is Lord, Lord of all; but we have a special and a most peculiar connection with Himself as such; we are in Him, members of that body of which He is Head:—and we are to be strong in Him, the Lord, and in the power of His might. His lordship is His title to claim all things. He is over all. That we own: He is Lord; and we are His servants. This is fully opened out to us in Phil. ii. But He who is Lord over all is Jesus, who is Head of the body, the church; and we are in Him, the Christ, and are to be strong in Him. As vitally one with Him, we may use His strength, and the power of His might^b: this is something more than merely owning that He has right and title to all, and that we are His servants, sustained, sheltered, and guided and honoured by Him, in His gracious love, as we may be and are.

Fellowship in life, and in the privileges of the Lord, enables us to be strong in Him, and in the power of His might, which is, as I have said, far more than the privilege of knowing and owning that He is by right, Lord of all;

^b The word here translated “might” has various renderings, *e.g.*, “strength, power, ability, might.”

and, in fact, our Lord, and that we are, in practice, His servants. The power of His might is ours,—for it has laid hold of us,—and we are so in Him, whose it is, that we can use it—it is a spring that is full and ever flowing. Next comes the word:—

“Put on the whole armour of God;” that is—the panoply or complete suit of armour of God’s providing. The text then proceeds to show, what is the nature of the conflict in which the soldier is here supposed to be engaged:—“that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,^c but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore,” &c.

From the exhortations to—“put on the panoply of God” (ver. 11); to “take unto you the panoply of God” (ver. 13), (exhortations which are addressed to those only who are already Christians) it is clear that one may be a Christian without having as yet *put on*,—taken to oneself—the said panoply at all. And the same truth is evidenced by the fact, that, even in Paul’s day, there were some in whom that which was the end of this exhortation never was made good. Yes: alas! as now there are many—so then, in Paul’s day, there were also some—of whom it would not have been truth to say they have withstood the wiles of the devil—they have withstood and stand fast.

The “wiles of the devil,” or the systematic workings of the false accuser (as it might be rendered literally) bring before us *cunning deceptions* of one who is an unscrupulous accuser. Other characters he has also, and other ways of working:—but, here, this is the character we have to be guarded against, and these are the ways in which he acts.

When Jehovah gave promise to Israel of a land flowing with milk and honey—that land was possessed by nations

^c In the Greek it stands “blood and flesh:” which is better; because the term “flesh and blood,” has a peculiar conventional use—which has no place here.

strong and mighty—and Israel had, after crossing Jordan, to take possession of that land, and of those cities. They were not to fight in their own strength, nor go their own way to work,—Jehovah was their King and Leader; and the battle against the uncircumcised was His. What they had to do was to keep themselves pure from every accursed thing; and, in the spirit of implicit obedience to their God, always to be *strong*, and of a good courage. The battle was the Lord's. But they had to fight aggressively; and, at times, sore was the conflict through which Israel had to pass with the nations which had possession of the land before them. Though Israel failed entirely, and so gat not the land in possession,—yet Israel shall eventually, upon the ground of the faithfulness and obedience of their King, yet come into possession of that land.

But the Lord Jesus Christ has sat down in heaven, at the right hand of God, and been owned as Head of His body, the Church. In Him we are possessed of all things. In Him we stand—stand for ever before God. The work is done. The light of a risen and of an ascended Christ has shined into our hearts to make this good for us, to assure us of this. Yet, is there a trial of our faith. And, while we are here below, there are, and will be, exercises which cannot be avoided by us. There are on high powers of spiritual wickedness—there is one there that accuseth day and night—and he has those that are his—principalities and powers, (chiefs and authorities)—the order-holders of the darkness of this world,—the spiritual powers of wickedness.

The question here is not as to what makes me a Christian; nor what are the privileges and blessings of being a Christian;—but, this rather, What is the conflict in which the consistent Christian is sure to find himself engaged? I say *sure*. For as sure as Christ sits in patience at God's right hand on high, waiting—so sure is conflict to them that are His, while they remain outside the veil. He, inside, is faithful to God and faithful to those over whom God has set Him: may we, outside, be faithful to God and to Him whom God has set over us, and then conflict must be ours. It appears, then, that

there are on high certain wicked spiritual beings who have the rule over wickedness in this world, and that the Christian soldier cannot escape from the power of the assaults of these without the aid of the armour of God.

This will, upon further consideration, I think, show (what we hardly think of enough, namely), that if there are lusts which we do not judge, the enemy can make any of us Christians to appear like one of his own people, and so find ground for accusing us on high.

It does not require much insight into the false worship of the heathen, to see how their gods were, after all, but deified carnal lusts. The Jupiter and the Juno, the Minerva and the Venus, etc., etc., of the ancients were nothing more than this.

There are testimonies for the one true God the Creator and Provider—the wide world over. But men do not like Him or His testimonies.

“That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, (even) His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that when they knew God, they glorified (Him) not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things who changed the truth of God into a lie, and served and worshipped the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. . . . And, even as they did not like to retain God in (their) knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind (Romans i. 19—28).

It seems to me to be impossible to read this passage (and such portions as Psalms xix., Matt. v. 45, Acts xvii. 24—31) without seeing that God has left a testimony for and of Himself upon creation, and in His dealings with man since the deluge, which is enough to condemn man as to all his religiousness, and as to all his self-invented

religions. And these testimonies for and of God cannot be obliterated. Alas! neither can the record of the principles and the conduct of those who acted independently of them be effaced.

When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God; they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.

The gods of mythology were but imbecile personifications of qualities which fallen man admired: patrons of lusts, such as the heart and mind of man, with his back turned upon the God of light, could, in his own heart, imagine, that, if multiplied, they would satisfy himself. The only ground for this, his vain imagining, that can be formed, is the self-love which suggests that that which proceeds from our much-loved selves must be good for us. But God had never made man's belly to be satisfied with the husks which the swine do eat. Man's heart and mind were made by God to find in Himself and in His service their refreshment, aliment, and strength. It was not on that side that God would, or with any moral propriety could, turn from the natural and established order of things. He could not meet lusts, though He could and would meet guilt, misery, and sin.

But these gods of old were none of them pictured as having even a single trait of Deity, as a Christian has been taught it. There was no proper eternity connected with them—no omniscience—no omnipotence—no moral character—no, not so much as is found even in a good man. But abominable passions and lusts in all of them, and all subject to Fate.

The gods of the heathen now-a-days are no better: gods that may be whipped, and gods whose pictures, according to the accounts given by their worshippers, are more like him that was a murderer and a liar from the beginning, than aught else. And how could it be otherwise. When fallen man sets to to make for himself a god, he is out of his own place, and human wisdom and energy can do no more here than they could if man

attempted to add new suns and moons to the firmament. What divine glory *could* there be in the gods which the fathers served that were on the other side of the flood? (Jos. xxiv. 15). What the worthiness of all the strange gods which Jacob *hid under the oak in Shechem* (Gen. xxxv. 4), in order that God, the living God, might not see them? What the value of all the gods of Egypt (Ex. xii. 12), against whom the Lord did execute judgment? And, alas! what a picture of man's folly does the first commandment contain (chap. xx. ver. 4—5)! And the molten calf (chap. xxx.), with Israel's burst of joy, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!" How does it all—as well as their two calves afterwards, with their tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan—how does it all proclaim the utter madness and folly of man as to God, when he acts for and from himself, and is not guided by revelation. When man makes a god for himself, whence can he draw his pattern, save from creation around him; from his own imaginings, or from Satan? God, the true God, cannot be the wisdom or power to aid man thus to dishonour Him, and to degrade himself. In point of fact, man has always drawn base picturings for his gods, from the cravings of his own desires and will; and, I doubt not but that the enemy has been constantly there to aid him in so doing. What suits his purpose better than that man should deify his love of wealth (or covetousness)—his love of power—his love of fleshly gratification, than by making gods for them in the heavens: thus man dishonours the true God, degrades himself by deifying his own lusts and passions, and puts himself, in spirit, under the power of Satan. He has made a religion of his own lusts and passions, and has bound himself with it. The words, "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25): "and whose god (is their) belly,^d and (whose)

^d This phrase, in modern times, would be limited to gluttony in eating and drinking: in Scripture language, its meaning is wider, if we may judge of it by the use of the words in the LXX., and might include (as, I doubt not, it does here) all that within a man is naturally the seat of affections, whether of the flesh or of the mind.

glory (is) in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phil. v. 19), are remarkable.

That evil spirits have sway over men, there can be no doubt: the words "The rulers of the darkness of this world" (21, 22), and "Ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (chap. ii. ver. 2), would suffice to prove it; but the truth is proved by passages innumerable besides these.

And the way, too, these enemies act upon man, is shown (chap. ii. ver. 3): "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others." That is—they act *through the lust* of the flesh, leading us to fulfil the desires of the flesh and the mind.

It is a great truth that Satan could get no hold of our blessed Lord, because He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and had a will and purpose to be obedient in all things. And when led up to be tempted of Satan in the wilderness, this was fully evidenced. We, on the contrary, have, besides the new nature, the old one too; and we need to be put on our guard, lest the enemy should act upon it in its deceitful lusts and passions, and so lead us off our high and holy ground of being, and being able to show that we are in the Lord, and have the power of His might.

It may be said: "But in Christendom we have no false Gods, which are deifications of evil human passions." Be it so. Yet this same principle may be present, only a little more artfully covered over. It has been said, that the Papal system is so arranged, that you may be and do anything you please in it, if you will but belong to it. I know not how far this is true; but, certainly, in the variety of its orders and classes, as presented, there does seem a path prepared for all the various conceits and fancies of the fallen human mind. In principle, the thing is clearly done in the Papal system: for the poor, fallen, though blessed, Virgin Mary, is set, by that system, as the person to whose human affections we can appeal—whose human affections and thoughts sway the Lord

Jesus and God. In the patron saints, too, and the position in which a devout Romanist finds himself before them, the same may be seen. And have we not, nearer home, all around us, systems of religion so framed as to shut out the free influence of God's truth, and to hinder and to prevent the Spirit. The national system is the sanction of this world in every way. Membership with it, and separation from the world, cannot possibly co-exist. The most that a member of it can do, is to judge his own heart and mind, and see that inwardly he does not love too much that world which, though it crucified Christ, is an integral part of His church. I know that dissent is upon a narrower, more separative, principle; but, practically, it is based upon the world, and shuts out the truth of God's church and of the Spirit, and sanctions this present evil world. I do not speak of what these Protestant systems were at the first, when the fresh energy of the Spirit of God was at work; but what they have now practically become in man's hand.

Again: as to the ruling of the darkness of this world; it is said to be under these wicked spirits who are on high. If I look at nations, as contrasted one with another, and at their chief cities, not in the point of Christlessness and Godlessness, in which, as being of this present evil world, they have a common agreement; but, as contrasted one with the other, I seem to learn something which is in accordance with our subject. There are such things as national peculiarities. A mass of Italians, and a mass of French, and a mass of English, would require very different modes of handling to rouse them up, and to work them. And this, not only because of the present differences of their present respective circumstances, but because also of constitutional difference, and difference of tastes.

If there be an evil spirit that watches over martial glory, one can well suppose it to be the one whom the French speak as (the deification of their own pride) "*La gloire.*" If there be one evil spirit more than another that watches over and cherishes commerce, one can well suppose it to be the one of whom the English speak (embodiment of their love of money), as commercial pros-

perity. Petersburg, Rome, Paris, London, may each have its own distinctive peculiar trait. Each has one most surely; and how are these connected. On the one hand, with the lust of the flesh and mind of the citizens of these places; and, on the other, with distinctive powers of darkness on high. The darkness of *the order of the world* in France has been ruled by Glory; and the darkness of the world in England has been ruled by Commercial Prosperity. An idea, or some one that presented an idea, has ruled Russia since the days of Peter the Great, and, perhaps, will rule it still onwards; for He that marked, in prophetic history, a sphere for the King of the North, for Gog and for Magog, for Tubal and Meshech, is above all the powers of darkness; and the Prince of the kingdom of Persia, who withstood Daniel (chap. x. ver. 13) has his counterpart in the North; and yet, opposing as he may be, he cannot prevent all things subserving God's counsels.

Now, the exhortation to us is to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." To stand upon the defensive, as being in Christ; and, when attacked, to stand fast, to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

Now, in order to do this, the first of all things is to have the affections of my heart, and the thoughts of my mind in the light. That so every thing that rises may be measured and judged ere it be accredited. Observe it: the *issues from* the heart and mind have to be judged. The entire badness of the flesh in itself has been taken for granted; the world has been stamped as the scene of the adversary's power; the new man has been created, and all its springs are from above. But as standing down here upon earth, the soldiers of the Lord, the issues of our hearts and minds have to be judged.

If I stand fast in the Lord and use the power of his might—I know where, and what, and who I am as so placed, and what manner of life here below it is which becomes such a one. The issues from heart and mind are not to be of the flesh, and according to the world and the spirit of darkness, but of the Holy Spirit and according to the truth. Nothing can guard my heart

and mind as a child of God, and a member of Christ, but the in-dwelling of that truth in my soul, by the Spirit of God, which has made me such.

We see then that we have a conflict—have to wrestle; that there is methodical order in him against whom we have to wrestle; accusation is his mode of work—as well as wrestling. Accusation had to be met against Israel in the days of Balaam (Numb. xxii.—xxiv.), against Job in his days—against saints of another class, too (Rev. xii.). All that the adversary can find in that which issues from a heavenly member of a risen Christ which is not according to the believer's place in the Lord, and according to the power of His might—becomes the ground of accusation. The effort on the enemy's part is, to stir up the old man in us, to get us occupied with it, to lead us to act upon it; and to do this, he tries to hide the truth from us, to keep us from it, from living upon it. Our wrestling is to abide in the Lord and in the power of His might. We see, too, that there is a connection between powers of darkness on high and the order-holders of the darkness of this age. But the darkness of this age is but the sanctioned systematized wickedness of the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—systematized by certain principalities and powers, and sanctioned by men.

And who but God can cause Christ to dwell thus in our hearts by faith, the centre of all our thoughts and desires, the one from whom we have the Spirit abiding, and hidden in whom we are the subjects of the action of the Spirit who worketh in us.

According to the measure which the saint has of the preciousness of this epistle to the Ephesians, will be his measure of the importance attached to this walk. The glory and honour of God in the Lord Jesus Christ are deeply concerned in our walk down here. It was, if I may so say, the practical obedience of the Ephesians, which was the open window that let all the flood of light about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, shine in. God and the Father, in all the bright counsels and plans about His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and the heavenly bride, never so revealed Himself to a

disobedient and gainsaying people. For, while the obedience in us Christians is *the occasion* of receiving fuller light, the goodness of God himself is the alone cause of the revelation of Himself. What a contrast, in this respect, between this epistle, in which the full unhindered play of God's truth and light and love is found, and the first epistle to the Corinthians, where fleshly disorder had to be corrected, or the epistle to the Galatians, in writing which Paul's spirit seems to have been straitened in him through the darkness among them, which had led them to grope after another foundation than Christ, and another energy than the Holy Ghost. The testimonies for God of the two masses, that at Ephesus and that among the Galatians, how contrasted! And how contrasted, too, (while each was perfect and gracious in its place), the two letters of Paul to the Ephesians, and Paul to the churches which are in Galatia!

Warfare may, as man speaks, be of two kinds;—it may be offensive, or it may be defensive merely. In the case of Israel it was offensive; for they had to be aggressive on the flesh and blood that were in the land, to drive them out of the Lord's inheritance. For us the warfare, as here presented at least (in other places, where the question is of carrying the testimony forward and planting the truth in parts where it was not before, it may be looked at in another aspect, but here the warfare), is defensive; we are *to stand fast, to withstand*, and having done all, *to stand*. For it is not for us to take possession by violence of the heavenly places, much less is it for us to think of ejecting thence the wicked spirits: they will be ejected hereafter, as we are told in the twelfth chapter of the Revelations. The Lord, when He has risen up from the right hand of God, where He now sits, and when they have overtly shown out their nature and works more fully and more openly than they have as yet,—the Lord will drive them out and their places shall be found no more in the heavens. But now we are the objects of assaults from them, and we must be prepared to resist and to wrestle. The call to us here is, not to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts. That would suit very well other epistles and places, in which man as a

sinner is being treated of; but in this epistle 'tis the Christian as partaker of the new nature, enjoying it and acting in it, which is the subject; and, consistently herewith, not the danger of the flesh of itself breaking loose, is treated of, but the danger of assaults upon it, efforts to stir it up, so as to hinder the right and true display of Christ in us,—efforts by spiritual wickedness on high. That there is that which is common between fallen flesh and blood and these wicked powers has been shown, and may be seen in another way, too, viz., in the different ways in which the evil is met in various epistles. If the evil power of the flesh in itself has to be met, then the cross is thrust before us—*we* are reckoned to be crucified, dead, and buried, together with Him. But if, on the other hand, as here, the question is of that which ever is on the watch to take occasion of the old nature in us, then the evil principalities, the order-rulers of the darkness of this world; whom Christ has overcome (Col. ii. 15), though they are now still found antagonistically agonizing against His glory in us, is referred to. The immense importance of seeing this, may be easily realized by the effects of the revelation to us (in Gen. iii.) of a master-mind as the one that ruined man: and by such revelations as are found elsewhere (as in Zech. iii. 1, 2; and in Job i. and ii.; Matt. iv., &c.) The discovery that it is not merely man, set loose from God through sin, that is *wandering*, he knows not where, but that there are master-spirits who can play with him, and mislead him by his own lusts and passions—this discovery puts man's position in quite another light to him. And to us it is known, that these regulators for the present of wickedness are all conquered—and are under the power of Him that conquered. Such a thought helps one to cease from oneself, and to look on high, where they, that deal contemptuously enough down here, are seen in their true light; ^e seen too, as not so much our enemies as His;

^e As in any failure, such as that of Lot's whole life, of Jacob's wandering, or of the fall of a David, a Solomon, a Job, a Peter, &c., no sound judgment is had until the motive-causes and the occasions are discerned in light: so is it with us now, and the springs of a heavenly saint's danger are therefore set before us.

and already, though still allowed to show their active opposition to Him and His glory, they are shown there to be already condemned. Oh, that the glory of God and the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ lay a little nearer to our hearts, were a little more visible in our minds, how would it simplify ten thousand difficulties; how would it set our hearts free and happy, yet in carefulness and watchfulness too,—lest His name, whom we love, should be blasphemed through us!

The whole context (ver. 10 to 20.) is in character *exhortative*: therefore, it has to do with practical conduct in us, and so it connects us with the *government* of God exercised over a people whom He has already saved. Now, as to such, there is a judgment exercised by God according as they fulfil their service or not. The judgment upon the service is not stated here, nor entered into the least, because the Spirit is occupied with the armour, as the provision of love divine for the service.

In handling the various parts of the panoply of God, most writers seem (to me at least), to have taken the subject too abstractedly, and to have viewed the various parts of it too much apart from the light peculiar to the epistle itself. Alas! we are, all, and always, too prone to bring our own thoughts into a text, or to find them in it, than to find and deduce from it that which God has put therein. Truth may be looked at as emanating from God, the expression of certain glory which is in Him—full of privilege and blessing to him that meekly receives it, and it may be looked at as connected with the people to whom it comes according to their needs and wants.

So far as I see, the cloth is shown to us on both its sides in this epistle. What truth more glorious as to God than the revelation of “the church—the fulness of Him that filleth all in all?” That is one side. The other is the suitability of this truth (that “the church is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,”) to carry the be-

More than this; for we are apprized and made aware of the danger beforehand, that the danger foreseen may be danger avoided.

liever, who walks in the Spirit, right through the wilderness aright. This armour is but the application to the believer, while in the place of conflict, of the precious truth of the earlier chapters. The girdle of truth; the breast-plate of righteousness; the preparation of the gospel of peace (for the feet); the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit; are found in a heavenly Isaac's tent, and nowhere else. We must not treat of them abstractedly, as though they were by origin ours and not God's, nor may we think of the panoply otherwise than as God's panoply for that body which is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. It is a complete suit of armour, and is of God's providing. The figure of "girded loins" to express readiness for, and strength in, service is modern as well as ancient, and quite common in scripture. Truth is the girdle. That is truth, *the* truth. The truth, too, of the glorious revelation contained in this very epistle is to be our readiness and strength in service. When truth sits close in upon the hidden man of the heart, so it always is. When the gracious, glorious heavenly revelations of this epistle are our girdle, they (not only discover all that in one aspect of it is leanness, our leanness, what else have we of our own, but they) are the power of an entirely new judgment of things; we that are thus girded are the members of the heavenly family of God—Christ is to be the first-born among many brethren. Nothing is more complete strength against the enemy, nothing is a more powerful answer to a lust of the flesh or mind, than the present privilege, calling and hope, that belongs to us. Should such a man as I flee? (Neh. vi. 11.) Darkness is detected by light; error by truth; truly so; but truth is *also* the girdle of our loins—that which gives us readiness and strength to meet all the assaults of the foe; to stand in patience and endure the conflict, and to be found in peace when the conflict is over.

We have thoughts and affections, and that, too, as good men, which sometimes need the girdle, that is, we are not always abiding in the light of divine counsel and love (see Paul, 2 Cor. xii.). But in the measure in which I act upon the truth of my being a heavenly man, a mem-

ber of that body of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious Head, a Son of God—in that measure I get a new canon, a new rule of walk; and we have power to walk in it. A perfect rule of walk is quite separable from perfect keeping of that rule of walk in all details. The believer has, and it is a marvellous statement, no less a principle, motive, rule, or end of walk, than had the blessed perfect Son of Man when He was in the world. This is proved most abundantly by Scripture: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” (See also chap. xvii.) The Lord’s walk was perfect *in every detail*,—no failure; all perfection. Paul could exhort us to follow him *as* he followed Christ—but while no other path, or principle, or kind of walk than Christ’s was Paul’s, or is ours—we do fail; and, practically, our own walk is not perfect. The blessed Lord came forth in His own perfect strength—though, in servant-character,—obedient unto death, the death of the cross—our standing is in Him who has been crucified, dead, and buried, but is now alive again from the dead. Thus our life is a life of dependence upon Him, but a life which is not other than His own—for He is our life—and it is a life which knows, here below on the earth, no other principle or rule of walk than was His when here below, of complete perfect sub-

jection and obedience. It is clear that the same *principle* may regulate two minds whose *duties and actions* will differ, because their *positions* are different. Implicit obedience is the principle, as much of a lieutenant as of the least sailor-boy in a ship. But the actions and duties of the two differ, because their positions differ. The Son of God was, as Son of man, *obedient* unto death, the death of the cross, and that too a most peculiar cross; for there He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. I have to stand in the effects of the work which He wrought and accomplished; and to be obedient to God in the path wherein He leads me, as thus saved by grace. Lo! I come to do Thy will oh God—the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it. “If truth is the rule of a heart: error has no power against it; simply because that heart is under the rule of truth, and error is not truth.”

The reference to preparedness for service and preparedness to use all the strength which we possess comes naturally before the mention of all armour. “If any man will do His will he shall know, etc.” And “thou has a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” teach us, in principle, this. What use is armour to him who does not mean to fight, has no purpose of heart to do the best he can? The girdle, therefore, is named rightly before the rest. With armour or without armour, the girdle has its place and its value.

Clothed with the breastplate of righteousness. If, in the human body, the head be most exposed in conflict (as, indeed, it is); yet, in a soldier, the body is the more likely part to be wounded. For this (as also for the head) there is the suited weapon of defence: *the breastplate of righteousness*. Upon the force of this righteousness, I would remark, that man—placed upright and able to meet every just claim—in the garden of Eden—has so acted as to betray his inheritance to Satan: he took place under Satan to share his fortunes and lot. But God saw, in the riches of His grace, an alternative open to Him, and that was, that His own Son should redeem the inheritance, and identify the believer with Himself. So the gospel now sets forth.

But, in the wonders of the way in which God has wrought, His righteousness comes out most marvellously; a righteousness which is the expression of God's just appreciation of, as He counts it, the person and work of the Lord Jesus. His Son came forth as Son of Man, and was rejected by man, by all men, as under Satan. As sin-bearer, He was allowed to bear sin in His own body on the tree. God would show forth what Heavenly mercy and grace could do; and the Son willingly took His part in the work. But it was justice not only to judge the Sin-bearer, but also to honor the Servant (who, though Son, had done such service). Now, in the expression of that part of the divine justice, Christ not only got a place in heavenly glory, as Son of Man,—but a glory attached to Him in it which identified, divinely and inseparably, with Himself, those that believe in Him. It is most just. For if He bare the penalty of my sins, I should never bear it myself. Yea, and more than this; for, one with Him, I am necessarily accepted in the Beloved. This is my righteousness—divine righteousness. I have a connection, through faith as the means, but in the Spirit, with Christ the Head, which connection demands and secures blessing on me from a righteous God. I am in Him, and am so blessed: graced in the beloved: looked at by God as a member of Christ, as one of that family circle in which He is the First-born among many brethren. Vast is this privilege.^f But not only is it thus, but further: He is by the Spirit in me. Not two, but one. So that there is a practical consequence attendant upon the blessing, even righteousness and true holiness. The righteousness of the breastplate, what is it, here, but that marvellous blessing of recognised fellowship with Christ the Head, referred to at the close of the first chapter. But if I know that God has made me to

^f The Romanist view of *righteousness imparted* is true in a sense, but is only part of the truth. There is the impartation of righteous works, because the seed of a perfect, divine nature in Christ is made ours the instant we believe. Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . And the Spirit follows thereupon. Protestantism as such, often, on the other hand, errs in separating the righteousness of faith from fellowship with the person of Christ, and the gift of the new nature.

be a member of His family, an individual item in the body of which Christ is Head—and that God owns it in heaven (as in chap. i.), and presents it to our faith and intelligence, then, most surely, must I, down here, count myself so too, and practically endure the present consequences of the blessing. I can thus sanction nothing in my walk which would be unworthy of fellowship with Christ in the Spirit.

III. As an effect of this, *the feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* Christ is my peace before God. He speaks peace to my soul. His word is peace! peace to him that is nigh, and to him that is afar off, too. God is the God of peace. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”

Faith in a heavenly Christ, glorified on high, gives a peace that passeth all understanding to the soul in the presence of God and man; and a heavenly, spirit-led, Nazarite passes through a desert world with foot unhurt, unweary,—he is withdrawn from minding earthly things by possession of a better portion, he can yield to the worldly that which they seek; and if there is contention, it is for the truth. But I would ask, how far does want of peace, as one passes through the earth, argue and prove the soul to be out of communion with its heavenly stores?[§]

IV. Next comes, “*Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked [one.]*”

The expression “above all” might, in English, mean either “over all these” (forenamed parts of the armour), or “above all things.” In the Greek, it does not mean the latter. It is an expression marking accumulation, addition, *besides* or *in addition to*; it might also be rendered *with a view to all these*, or *dependent upon all these*. I may remark that there seems to be more of individual

[§] Surely, experience of our leanness, and of the world's wretchedness or disappointment, is not the sandal of peace which the Lord on high has provided for His pilgrim band.

energy marked in the expression “taking the shield”—in order to meet the fiery darts, than at first sight may appear. Being girt, or having girded oneself, about with truth,^h and being clothed, or having clothed oneself, with the breastplate, and been shod, or having shod oneself, with the preparation of the gospel of peace—then we have to take up, or take into our own hands, the shield of faith. The expression, “take into your own hands,” is correct, because the idea which is sought to be communicated is that of appropriation for *personal use*; even in order individually to resist the fiery darts, etc. Of shields, there were two, the *thureos*, or large oblong shield, here referred to; and the *aspis*, or round shield.

The shield of a faith, which comes in, in addition to girded loins, cuirassed bosom, and shod feet, marks with emphasis [just as does, indeed, the use to which the shield is put] that it is faith exercised during the life of the believer, which is the subject. From the hour that we know that God has given to us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son; from that hour, we know that we live by faith, and that all our life here below is one of death and resurrection: for we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead. The practical power to do this develops itself as we go on. The babe in Christ has less of it than the young man, and the young man less of it than the father in Christ. Father is not more saved, or more safe, than babe, 'tis clear; but in the practical power of walking by faith, there is growth; and yet all have the power in principle: for other life of Christ is there none other than this life of dependence. Readiness and purpose to serve—full instruction in the fellowship which we have in the righteousness of God in Christ—in principle and in practice—peace of heart, leading to peace of ways, expose us to assaults from the foes of Christ. But he that knows himself to be indeed one with Christ, sees a father's heart glowing in the Father of the Lord

^h Both (the being girt, and the having girded oneself) are abstractedly true; though they look at the same thing from different points of view:—the latter is the sense in this place, I think.

Jesus towards himself, he has the secret of shelter for his joy. All divine counsel rolls around Christ. Christ's glory is the end which God proposes. The believer is inseparable from it, and knowing this, has power to receive and ward off the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Man's flesh, when at work, is like dough-air rising, ere it is fully leavened. Bubble of paste rises after bubble of paste, and swells and bursts, pouring forth its air. But a believer's heart may be there, and kept there through faith, and then all that is evil in the flesh will be judged in principle, and all practically set aside, with Faith's motto—"Crucified, dead, and buried, together with Christ." The fiery darts of the wicked one are not the belchings forth of the law of sin and death in our members, to which I have adverted. But they are rockets fired at us by the wicked one—which is quite another thing. The law of sin is in my members: if I go into the way of evil, I tempt Satan rather than he tempts me. He may come and tempt me on the principle of the flesh, if I be idle, and go not forth to the war at the time that the King's sons usually go forth. But a fiery dart—a dart carrying fire—is quite another thing to a mere hurt, and it is launched, in the case before us, by the wicked one, and against us. If we may believe some heretics and schismatics, a sudden and bright luminous thought was the beginning of their course. *They* judged it to be of God. The denial of the grace, or the holiness, or the truth of the Gospel, led others to suppose it was of Satan—a *fiery dart*—that set them on fire. Blessed be God! He has said whereby ye *shall be able* to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. The light of heaven has truth, righteousness, and grace always in it. The light of the enemy is often only one element, so exaggerated as to displace the other two: and it has thus proved to be not of God. But practical dependance upon God tries all things, discerns and judges all things: tests all things by its congruity or want of congruity, before God, with Christ. And dependance upon God, the shield of faith, can receive upon it and quench all such fiery darts, be they great, or be they little. But it needs practical faith to walk thus.

The flesh works most with the carnal Christian. The darts are aimed at the soldier on service.

V.—The next word is—“*And receive the helmet of salvation.*”¹ It is a different word in Greek—“receive”, “accept what is offered” (v. 17), from the word “take to yourself” (v. 16). The complete deliverance from evil, and the complete introduction into blessing, seems to me the force, here, of “*salvation.*”¹ According to the epistle before us, both of these are ours already, and known to us as ours; and, as righteousness covers and protects the seat of our affections, so does *perfect salvation* shelter the head or seat of intelligence and thought. As a man naturally clothes himself in his armour ere he dons the helmet, so also there is spiritual propriety in the place and order in which this truth is here introduced to us. Next, we have—

VI.—[And receive] *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

None but God himself can fully appreciate or use perfectly aright the things of God. The Lord Jesus on high applies that sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, to the hearts of heavenly worshippers (Hebrews iv. 12, 13). He uses it for God among the churches, and among them that have an ear to hear (Rev. i., ii and iii). To them that are strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, this sword is put into their hands. They need to remember that it is the sword of another, and that they must use it according to His exercise, and under Him: but, like as Goliath’s sword was to David, and in an hour of distress he said, “*there is none like that; give it me*” (1 Sam. xxi. 9); so is this sword of the Spirit to a believer. It has quite a history of its own; and its being ready provided for his hand is a very history in itself: and to him it is not said, as to David, “If thou wilt take that, take it,” but “*receive ye the sword of the Spirit.*”

¹ In 1 Thess. v. 8 the expression is, “for an helmet the *hope of salvation.*” The different aspects in which the believer is looked at in these two epistles explains this. In that to the Ephesians, he is looked at in the Spirit, and so as already in Christ in God. In that to the Thessalonians, he is a part of the Church which is in God, but in conflict on the earth; and deliverance is a hope as to the body.

I should limit my thoughts here by the position in which the epistle views the soldier. In the temptation in the wilderness, the sword of the Spirit which the Captain of Salvation himself used, was used *defensively*, as parrying the assaults of the adversary, and driving him from the attack. Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be exposed there to the aggressive attacks of the foe. He was there tried in every way, and He was found to be that which He assuredly was, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." But He showed the power of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. "IT IS WRITTEN," was his answer to every assault. He kept the perfect servant-place and character, though He was *personally* Lord and God. And He there showed the almighty eternal temper of the weapon. Satan can do nought against any one that is sheltered in intelligence, subjection, and obedience to God. If he could, he would be more than God; and God's character would not be that which it is, nor His way such as it is, to honour those that honour Him.

As a man, I may well pray "Lead us not into temptation;" but, as a saint, I may also well say "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James i. 2). As soldiers of Christ, the Lord's battles are all of them ours; and we have to endure hardness as the good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

May we know how to act in the Lord, and in the power of His might; that so, not our poverty, but the etherial, divine perfectness of the weapons wherewith we are armed may be made apparent.

VII.—Lastly, we have the individual tone and the individual connection with the Church Militant, marked in the final exhortation—All-prayer.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak."

Praying: "praying always" marks the moral position of

dependance; “with all prayer and supplication”, shows its fervency; “in the spirit,” marks its tone.

And the extent of range: first—“for all saints”; and, secondly—for the outwardly embarrassed, but heaven-sent and heavenly sustained, servants of the gospel upon earth is to be noticed, viz.: I, however little I be—however little known to the saints—my name, perhaps, unheard of by the Lord’s servants in the work of the gospel and the truth in the Church Militant upon earth—I am one of them, and I have to resist as one of them, as one that has an interest in them all, and the work which God is doing through them and among them; and they all have a place in my heart^k and I in theirs.

The heart and mind are found at various times, in various states and circumstances; but “praying always with all prayer” takes in every state of experience. We can empty our hearts out with all that’s in them, though we may then have to add a “nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” which the Perfect One added (Mat. xxvi., 39), though His servant Paul forgot to do so (2 Cor. xii., 8). We can pray, when we do not know what to pray for (as in Romans viii. 26, 27). And we can pray in the Holy Ghost, knowing at the very time that we have the petitions from Him, and shall receive the answers in due season (as Dan. ix., etc.).

It is in weakness that we find strength made perfect: but it is also (as is seen in this contest) in strength being made perfect in us, that we realise and learn the weakness, yea, the nothingness of what we are in ourselves.

A faithful, victorious servant knows his own dependance and weakness better than any other one.

^k If the instruction concerning the earthly relationships (chap. v. 22, vi. 19) is looked at as a parenthesis this will be seen: chap. v. down to 22 is about life and its characteristics; chap. vi. 10, 20, about the serving of saints as of the Church Militant.

Mail'd in armour, heavenly bright,
Strong in Him, whose grace is might;
Faint not, little doth remain
Of the drear campaign.

N^o. XXVI.THE CONSCIENCE IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S
PRESENCE.

THE knowledge of our proper relationship with our gracious God, as Father, and of our calling and standing in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ,—the Heavenly Son of Man at God's right-hand,—necessarily goes far beyond all questions of conscience and exercises of soul in the children of God. Yet because of this, and in order to the full blessing—"fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ"—the conscience of the believer must be in the light; the walk in the light; all that is individual judged *there—alone with God*. For there is no such thing as *corporate* conscience. May it not be said that the Lord's great purpose, in all His dealings in grace, is to bring the souls of His children—the individual soul—into fellowship with Himself? Does not John so present it in that precious Word (1 John i. 1—7)?

There seems to be a special need at this hour (therefore, a fit subject for the Present Testimony) to speak as to conscience being in His Presence, so that all might be judged according to God. It was always so surely. But this present is a solemn moment. Christendom, spurious, and apostate Christianity enlarges.—Satan is working mischief as an angel of light; flesh or man's nature is active; combinations between the true people of God and mere professors are weakening the former and nullifying their testimony—the mass indeed are sunk down to the level of the earth, alas! Of those who are in some measure separated to God, what urgent need of self-judgment as to the will and ways! What confession may be made! What humiliation is becoming! All

this demands that conscience should not only be exercised, but be in the light of the Lord's presence. In fact, this lesson may be learnt: that while there may have been activity in God's service, even joy, and the Lord (for faith was there) using the strength of His servant, yet conscience, not having been fully in the light; and self and nature not judged there,—communion with God, and its happy peaceful effects and power, have been unknown or very imperfectly known in the soul.

We read those remarkable words in Ephes. chap. v. ver. 8. "Now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light." What does the Apostle mean in its practical experimental sense by "light in the Lord"? Surely if the gentle, but strong, hand of the Spirit of God leads the renewed soul,—the new man,—the divine nature in the believer—into immediate contact with its Source (*i. e.* God Himself)—conscience brought there—all will be seen, all judged (according to the measure given) in that presence "where no flesh can glory." There the flesh is judged, there sin is seen in its exceeding sinfulness—there the will is detected—there it is no longer the *fruit* only of sin and flesh which is judged, but the *roots, deep laid roots*, exposed and made bare in that light. The world is there, unmasked; above all, Grace, seen and learnt in its proper Divine character; and the soul, by faith established in it; there the blessed Source, the God of all grace, bowed to in another and deeper way; reconciliation known more truly; the living glory of the Father's Name connected with the soul; and some ray of the beauty and glory of Jesus, the Son of Man, seen and appreciated, through the power of the present and Eternal Spirit. "Now are ye light in the Lord." The heart may make progress now in the power of its communion, yet the work in conscience go on from time to time, whenever there is something in nature not in obedience to Christ, "Casting down reasonings and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x.) It may be further stated, that the conscience being in the light, and the affections of the soul drawn out to God,

who reveals His glory in the face (Person) of Jesus Christ, the soul learns what "fear and trembling" mean in the Word. Yet that fear is in the very light of the Grace, consciously possessed and in the taste of it. For sure I am, at least I believe the thought to be according to truth, that while tasting the love of God in Christ, and the joy of relationship—while the cry of Abba Father, intelligently understood as giving a place of heavenly Sonship with and in Jesus—while such affections may be higher and deeper blessings through the Spirit—yet there is a blessed, solid, divine satisfaction and joy in discovering and knowing the holiness of God. Oh, the joy when the Spirit sanctions and enforces that truth in the light, that nothing can be suffered in the child as to will—nothing recognized by God which is contrary to His nature and being. All must be judged—the levity and folly of man—the will and way—the mixed motives, all exposed there, that God may impart deeper blessing. Hence chastisement, and the exercises of Hebrews xii., "that we might be partakers of His holiness."

The scriptures, in their rich and varied treasures, afford abundant illustrations of the action on conscience and exercises of soul when man is brought into the light of God. We see there the Divine hand at work, illuminating the understanding, quickening and enlightening, as well as purging the conscience; purifying the heart by faith, and drawing out its affections, renewed by grace, to God; to us, the affections gathered round and centered in the Person of the Son. It may be profitable just to glance at a few instances of the Spirit's handy-work, to exemplify and apply what is stated above. The case of Abraham would not be adduced as showing *exercise* of soul and conscience. Yet as to the general question of God acting on man's soul, it is most important to observe, that if Abraham, called and elected peculiarly as the Lord's witness against an idolatrous world, needed power for difficult requirement, the Holy Ghost teaches us in Acts vii. the secret that, "the God of Glory appeared unto him."—The glory shone into his soul, and he "obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went." (Hebrews xi.)

In the account we have of Moses in Exodus ii. and iii., seen in the light of Acts vii., where we get some comment on these chapters, we find exercise of soul. We see his conscience brought into the light, and its effect in power and communion. There is activity in him (in Exodus ii. 11—14), and love of his brethren, though expressed with carnal power and wisdom; “he looked this way and that way;” “he supposed his brethren would have understood;” marking the want of calmness and guidance, and he has to flee from the consequences of his act. But when he beholds the glory from the burning bush; when he has to put off his shoes from off his feet, (the rough shoe of nature must come off), for it was holy ground; when sent by Him who calls Himself “I Am, that I Am,” what a contrast do we find! Unable to move or speak at first; yet, when the heart of Moses is assured, and faith is there—the rod of power is taken instead of the carnal weapon—boldness now in the presence of Pharaoh, endurance in difficult service, “he endured as seeing Him who is invisible; and of this exercised servant, the Holy Ghost deigns to say, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers xii.)

In the history of Job, we have a still more apt illustration of our subject. We see there, in a pointed way, the difference wrought in a man, and he a child of God, when conscience is brought into the light of His presence. It will suffice here (without entering into the details of God’s wondrous^a dealings with his servant Job), to notice the case generally; and it is happy to remember the Holy Ghost’s own comment on the cause of Job’s trial and great afflictions:—“Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James v. ii.) The end of the Lord was to give his servant and precious child, Job, deeper blessing, true communion with Himself; and this He did *by bringing his conscience into the light of His*

^a In the Present Testimony, Vol. IV., p. 58, also p. 164, able papers will be found on Job’s history. The reader is referred to them.

presence. No one would suppose it was mere natural uprightness which Job exhibits at first—that he was religious or pious according to the flesh. God's own words to the Adversary of Job and man (chaps. i. 8, ii. 3), would show the contrary. But Job's nature detected grace, and *exalted itself.* He was occupied with *himself*—his good works—his prayers—his righteousness (the history of many a soul, and quickened soul too, at the present hour); and God would have all judged according to the light, hence His dealings with Job. We see the terrible process. We hear fearful language before God in the bitterness and trial of his soul; he is sifted; his heart is *wrung out.* Oh! to those who in their measure have known something of this process—the Spirit of God carrying conscience into the light, where the heart must be wrung out; “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” judged; all passing under His eye who has judged, and has brought this judgment into conscience. The process continues, as we know, till poor (but rich) Job utters the memorable words, “I have *heard* of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye *seeth* Thee. *Wherefore* I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Grace now understood in the light, produces self-abhorrence, self-loathing. Grace gives the broken spirit, which we so essentially need at this hour. Grace teaches us. May the reader of this remember (and if the point be urgently pressed, let him bear with the writer a little), that *it is only in the Lord's presence that grace can be appreciated in its proper or Divine character.* Hence the importance of this subject. Let this thought be well weighed, that *communion is before walk, or service, or exercise, or gift.* Oh! for the power of true communion! One drop of the love of Jesus in a broken heart and softened spirit! Look for a moment at that word in Titus ii. 11, 14, and connect it with the Lord's presence. “Grace,” the apostle tells us, “teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts (in fact, *ourselves*), we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” The soul, being true, covets to learn thus. It is to be learnt of Grace. Where? In the Lord's presence; for outside that we cannot really know grace.

But, further, this precious grace teaches us to look for that blessed hope (the return of Jesus to take us up into the air to Himself), and the appearing of the Glory of the Great God and Our Saviour Jesus Christ (the Epiphany, or public manifestation of the Glory of Jesus, when the Saints will be manifested with Him). Blessed be His Holy Name, for such hope!

Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and other prophets, in their day and history, would witness something of the same. We may take a passing notice of Isaiah, and the rather as it furnishes so lovely a picture of grace and light acting on conscience. What cry burst from his lips, as narrated in chap. vi., when he saw the glory of Jehovah Jesus filling the Temple (consult John xii. 41, where the Holy Ghost shows us it was Jesus)? "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips:" and when the grace reaches him—for we see three virtues or powers flowing to him—from the Throne and Person of the Lord; first, full conviction of what he was; secondly, full forgiveness and purging of conscience; thirdly, the heart won, and the dependence of true affection: "Here am I, send me"—The servant and prophet formed, and for difficult service, the message of judgment. These illustrations might suffice, but I would yet briefly notice one or two in the New Testament.

There where the mighty instruments for God's work were prepared, the Holy Ghost, being down here, consequent on the work of the Lord Jesus, there is necessarily a deeper action on conscience—a deeper and brighter glory visits the soul. Not that the deep and bright glory of God did not visit Abraham—but Abraham never could have known the communion which Paul and John enjoyed. The question of righteousness had not been raised, which we know the law did—and, instead of promises, to which Abraham in his wondrous faith looked, Paul and John (the Church's portion) possessed the Accomplisher of the promises, The Lord of Glory, the heavenly Son of Man—all was deeper—"The true light now shone." "It was fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." With what wondrous grace, then, divine tenderness and power, the

Light of God's Presence.

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Lord Jesus dealt with Peter's conscience after his fall, restoring his soul and putting honour upon His servant (John xxi). The Lord had accomplished redemption, and in Resurrection light and power, stands before His poor trembling servant, conscious of having accomplished sin and a terrible fall. The Lord does not take up the sin—the fruit or expression of the sins within—but He deals with the *root*. The deep laid evil in his nature—the immense self-confidence in Peter; the carnal energy which characterised him. (Alas! if one may speak for others, how much of this have we found in ourselves, and the bitter fruits: how far has it been judged in His presence?) “*Peter was grieved*, because He said unto Him the third time, lovest thou Me?” Here was conviction of conscience. There is nothing but grace from the Lord, winning the affections of the soul of His servant; but showing him it could no longer be Peter for power of walk, but Christ in Peter. When filled with the Holy Ghost, we have the mighty Apostle of the Circumcision.

In Saul of Tarsus we have that which exceeds: He meets—he sees, in his mad career (the very expression of the Jews' hatred to Messiah), the Lord of Glory, who has accomplished Redemption. Saul beholds the Heavenly Man, from whose face streamed down the Glory of God—a glory too effulgent for man (he is blind for a season). Saul utters these strange words (conscience struck and confounded), “Who art Thou, Lord?” He finds that Jesus the Head in Heaven speaks of all the saints as Himself. “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” He preaches the Gospel of the Glory, that Jesus is The Son of God. Peter's testimony was that He was Lord and Christ; but *παῖς* (servant) rather than this full Divine title: The Son of God. How sweetly this honoured servant afterwards learns the secret of power, as recorded in 2 Cor. xii., where the Lord shows him that it is dependance in conscious weakness which was the condition of power. “My grace sufficeth for thee, *for* (the condition) My power is made perfect in weakness.” It may be observed here, that Revelation itself, Blessed and glorious as it is, is not power, but communion with

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God in the Revelation. It produces for Paul, here, the thorn in his flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. "All power is of God." The creatures—even the Angels who have kept their first estate—only have strength as communicated to them: hence the secret of the blessings of dependance—"dependant supplicants alone prevail."

Further, do we not find, in Rev. i., the secret of that power which enabled John, the beloved apostle, to have communion with the heavenly scene opened to him, as recorded in chap. iv.—he has title and power to look within the door opened in heaven. He has communion there with the crowned elders, as secure as they are; yea, as The Throne itself. When John's conscience was brought into that living blaze of glory—judicial glory, no doubt around The Person of the Son of Man (chap. i., when he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day)—he "fell at His feet as dead." The glory was exceeding bright and overpowering. Yet, in fulness of grace and Divine tenderness, Jesus said, "Fear not."

John never feared any thing after that. Seals, trumpets, vials, judgments, all pass before him: he is unmoved in their midst. John is witness to the end,* not only of the coming of The Lord Jesus, but of the Kingdom and Glory—of the New Heavens and the New Earth. May each of our hearts taste, in sweet communion, the love of Our Father; and, in personal love to Jesus, Our Lord, bow head and heart in worship, saying, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." Amen.

* Compare John's Gospel, xxi. 22—23.

UNTO HIM THAT LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN
HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HATH MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS
UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER; TO HIM BE
GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER
AND EVER.
AMEN.

Revelations i. 5, 6.

END OF VOLUME XI.